

Contact Information

Blackhawk Hills
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Upcoming Events

[Click event title for more information.](#)

Office Closed

February 15, 2016
President's Day

Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference

March 2, 2016
9:30 AM
223 East Front Avenue
Stockton, IL


Zoning Administrators Meeting

March 2, 2016
9:30 AM
Ogle County Planning and
Zoning Department 911
West Pines Road Oregon,
IL 61061

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BLACKHAWK HILLS Regional Council



Jo Daviess • Stephenson • Carroll • Ogle • Whiteside • Lee

Thank you for your interest in Blackhawk Hills Regional Council. You are receiving this newsletter because we would like to keep you up-to-date on projects and initiatives in the six-county region of Blackhawk Hills. We serve Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside Counties in northwestern Illinois.

If you have a project that you would like our assistance with, please contact our office at 815-625-3854 or submit a [Project Proposal Form](#) on our website.

If you have news or upcoming events that you would like us to share in our newsletter, on Facebook, or our website, please contact us at 815-625-3854 or by email at info@blackhawkhills.com.

Governor Announces Formation of Non-Profit Economic Development Organization

Governor Rauner recently announced in his State of the State address that leaders at the [Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity](#) (IDCEO) and business stakeholders will collaborate in organizing a newly formed private, non-profit organization focusing exclusively on increasing Illinois' competitiveness for job creation and investment. The creation of a private economic development organization was a key recommendation of the Governor's bipartisan transition committee last year.

The new [Illinois Business and Economic Development Corporation](#) (ILBEDC), modeled from best practices of other successful state and local economic development organizations, will focus on sales, marketing, and customer service. It will work at the speed of business and maintain lean, efficient operations. The corporation will be governed by a diverse board of experienced economic development will be governed by a diverse board (currently under development) of experienced economic development and business leaders.

The ILBEDC is a private organization seeking 501(c)(3) status. The Governor will sign an executive order in coming days to formally establish its relationship with the IDCEO. The formation of the ILBEDC and its operations (at least through FY16) will be funded by private donations. IDCEO will continue to work with companies on expansion and relocation efforts, until the ILBEDC is operational.

Funding Opportunities

Visit blackhawkhills.com/grants or contact our office for more information on these and other funding opportunities.

[Scotts Miracle-Gro: GRO1000 Grassroots Grants](#)

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company's GRO1000 Grassroots Grants help foster the development of gardens and green spaces in the United States. Grants of up to \$1,500 are awarded to local communities throughout the country to help bring edible gardens, flower gardens, and public green spaces to more neighborhoods. The focus is on garden and green space beautification projects that incorporate the involvement and engagement of neighborhood residents and foster a sense of community spirit. Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies. Deadline: February 22, 2016. Click [here](#) for more information.

[Dollar General Literacy Foundation](#)

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation supports nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and libraries that offer literacy programs in communities served by Dollar General in 40 states. Currently, the Foundation is accepting grant requests through the following programs: Adult Literacy Grants support nonprofit organizations that provide direct services to adults in need of literacy assistance. Family Literacy Grants support family literacy service providers that combine parent and youth literacy instruction. Summer Reading Grants help nonprofit organizations and libraries with the implementation or expansion of summer reading programs for students who are new readers, below grade level readers, or readers with learning disabilities. Deadline: February 25, 2016. Click [here](#) for more information.

[Distance Learning & Telemedicine \(DLT\) Grant Program](#)

USDA Rural Development's DLT grant program helps rural communities use the unique capabilities of telecommunications to connect to each other and to the world, overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density. For example, this program can link teachers and medical service providers in one area to students and patients in another. 100% grant applications are accepted through a competitive process. Applicants are required to provide a minimum 15 percent match. Awards can range from \$50,000 to \$500,000. Deadline: March 14, 2016. Click [here](#) for more information.

[Kessler Foundation: Signature Employment Grants](#)

The Kessler Foundation's Signature Employment Grants provide support for non-traditional solutions that increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000 per year for up to two years are awarded nationally to fund pilot initiatives, demonstration projects, or social ventures that lead to the generation of new ideas to solve the high unemployment and underemployment of individuals with disabilities. Preference is given to interventions that overcome specific employment barriers related to long-term dependence on public assistance, advance competitive employment in a cost-effective manner, or launch a social enterprise or individual entrepreneurship project. Nonprofit organizations, public or private schools, and public institutions, such as universities and government agencies, based in the United States or any of its territories, are eligible to apply. Deadline: March 18, 2016. Click [here](#) for more information.

CEO Masquerade Ball

Are you ready for an evening of mystery and fun? The CEO Class of 2016 is hosting a Masquerade Ball on Saturday, February 27, 2016 at Deer Valley Country Club, 3298 Hoover Road, Deer Grove, IL. Doors will open at 5:30 PM. Hors d'oeuvres and dinner will be served. Entertainment and dancing to follow. Formal attire requested.



Profits from this event will help this year's 21 students with seed money to start their own businesses. The CEO Program is a way to educate high school students to become experienced entrepreneurs while also receiving academic credit hours. Blackhawk Hills Regional Council serves on the CEO executive and advisory boards.

For tickets to the ball or for more information on the CEO Program visit www.wacc-ceo.org.

Jump Start to a Good Year! Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference



The Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference will be held on March 2, 2016 from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM, at Holy Cross Parish, located at 223 East Front Avenue in Stockton, IL. Presentation topics will include:

- Transitioning from Winter Feed to Summer Grazing
- Who Manages Forage on Your Spread?
- Forage Options for Better Grazing
- Economic Impact of Grazing Management Decisions
- Grazing and Water Quality: More Compatible than Portrayed?
- Lessons Learned in Contract Grazing and Niche Markets

Blackhawk Hills is sponsoring the event along with the University of Illinois Extension and the Northwest Illinois Forage and Grassland Council. Early registration is \$20 and after February 24 it is \$25. At the door registration is \$30. To register call Extension at 816-858-2273 or click [here](#).

27th Annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference

The 27th Annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference will be held on March 9 and 10, 2016 at the Crowne Plaza, Springfield, Illinois.

This year's conference is focused on creative strategies for the future of rural Illinois. Speakers will discuss broad trends affecting rural places. They will then present new approaches designed to revitalize rural communities, teaching attendees to identify and accentuate the attributes that enhance the quality of rural living.

Sessions include presentations on tourism, downtown revitalization, community health access and assessment, and the importance of arts and the creative economy to rural regions. Attendees will also discover how to support local entrepreneurship by using innovative strategies such as microlending and crowdsourcing, as well as learning about both state and federal resources available to communities. In addition, several speakers will focus on resources available to communities today from both state and federal agencies. Finally, there will be ample opportunities for networking and connecting with colleagues and with leaders in rural community and economic development.

For detailed information, contact the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at 309-298-2637 or visit www.iira.org.

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