

Chamber group hosts annual awards dinner

Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce honored area businesses for service, accomplishments

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The Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual chamber dinner Thursday at the Starved Rock Lodge, where local businesses were honored for their service, commitment and accomplishments over the past year.

Organizations were honored for time spent as members of IVAC, ranging from 10- and 20-year anniversaries to more than 50 years. Specific businesses and individuals also were honored for their contributions to IVAC over the past year.

Dawn Farneti has been involved in IVAC for the past 15 years and won the award for volunteer of the year. She first joined the chamber to network, and her role gradually expanded into helping with fundraisers and after-hours events. When she was announced as the winner, she said she



Olivia Doak

Executive Director Bill Zens speaks to the crowd Thursday at the Illinois Valley Area Chamber dinner at Starved Rock Lodge.

was surprised and amazed.

"I was just doing what an ambassador does and doing my part for the

chamber," Farneti said. "I try to support the whole chamber. It's important to me [because] this is the community

where I live and work."

The award for outstanding service to the chamber was given to Stone Jug Barbeque in Peru, and the commitment to the community award was given to Illinois Valley Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS).

The event began with an invocation and words from Pastor Trevor Workman of Crossbridge Community Church. The audience was greeted by Board of Directors President Jeff Borelli and given a recap of 2022 in review by Executive Director Bill Zens. The award ceremony immediately followed, along with a dinner and benediction.

Zens reflected on the chamber's projects in 2022 and outlined goals for the next year. In 2023, Zens said the chamber will continue to connect education to businesses in the area to prepare and bring in the next generation of workers. He also said the chamber will continue to work with businesses and individuals on development, training, community events and networking.

For updates and information about upcoming IVAC events, visit www.iva-ced.org or go to the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/iamivac.