

Putting the community first pays off for Afterwords Books in tough age for bookstores

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – Afterwords Books of Edwardsville owner **LuAnn Locke** has always gone the extra mile for her customers.

Recently, the national small business movement, **Independent We Stand**, announced the quarterfinalists, which included Afterwords Books of Edwardsville in the 2015 Independent We Stand Independent Small Business of the Year Award. This announcement precedes **Small Business Saturday on Nov. 28**, encouraging holiday shoppers to support these businesses over big boxes and national chains.

Afterwords Books is located at 454 E. Vandalia St. in Edwardsville, offering new and gently-used books, educational toys, and unique, handmade gifts crafted by local artisans. Afterwords Books will have holiday hours from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday, now to Dec. 23.

“Our community understands that their individual spending choices dictate what their neighborhoods ultimately look like,” Locke said. “They realize the importance of each individual’s commitment to nurture the community, to see their tax dollars directly benefit our city, that culture and diversity are meaningful, that our neighbors are all working together to make a difference.”

Bill Brunelle, co-founder of Independent We Stand, said the award is their way of recognizing the outstanding efforts of people in their respective communities.

Voting is now underway at www.IndieBizAward.com through Dec. 13. Voters may visit the website to cast one vote each day.

Locke said advancing to the quarterfinals in the Independent We Stand competition is an honor, mostly because “it comes from our customers.”

“There are over 22,000 votes so far and 315 nominations nationwide,” she said. “We shared the links with our customers on Facebook and Twitter and rallied enough to get to the quarterfinals.”

Afterwords Books has thousands of books, new to used, with all different types of genres.

The local book store offers a trade for credit program, allowing people to bring in used books. The store offers three different book clubs for children, a once a month book club for adults and supports local artisans with crafting types of classes and different classes. At 10 a.m. on Tuesday and 11 a.m. Saturday, the store offers a story time for children.

“We try to give back however we can through schools, churches or other non profits,” Locke said. “We are happy to help out where we can. I bought the store in 2011.”

In 2013 and 2014, the Edwardsville book store was named one of the top 10 independent businesses in the country. Locke said she hopes to make that echelon again this year.

The 2015 Indie winner will receive prizes with a combined value of more than \$10,000, including:

\$5,000 grand prize

\$1,000 STIHL equipment certificate. STIHL products are sold exclusively through local, independent servicing dealers and support more than 9,000 STIHL dealers in communities nationwide.

Small Business Web Starter Package” from independent web design firm – The Meridian Group

Three days/two nights stay at an independent beach resort in Virginia Beach, Va. (valued at \$1,000)

Plaque to display at winner’s business

Public relations and social media recognition

Quarter and Semifinalists will receive a Premium Membership from Independent We Stand

Nearly 22,000 votes were cast for 315 nominees during the nominations phase. The quarter-finalists in alphabetical order are:

A.Dodson’s, an apparel, home décor and gift shop with locations in Suffolk, Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Va.

Afterwords Books, a bookshop in Edwardsville, Ill.

Allan’s Flowers & More, a florist in Prescott, Ariz.

Armando’s Pizza of Salem, a pizza and sub shop in Salem, N.H.

Artsy Fartsy Art Gallery, an art gallery in Carson City, Nev.

Carr Hardware, a hardware supply and rental store with four locations in Mass.

Coco’s Cottage, a specialty women’s clothing store in Jasper, Ga.

Collage, a specialty boutique and gift shop in York, Pa.

Continental Earthworks, a forestry and wildland fire mitigation company in Avon, Colo.

Cross Eyed Owl Gift shop, selling home décor, gifts and more in Valatie, N.Y.

From My Shelf Books & Gifts, a new and used bookshop in Wellsboro, Pa.

Island Books, a bookstore in Mercer Island, Wash.

License 2 Grill, an American restaurant offering American comfort food in Thornwood, N.Y.

Life's Memories and More, an arts & crafts supply store in Palmer, Mass.

Mae Power Equipment, an outdoor power equipment dealer in Mission, Texas

Metamorphosis Salon and Spa, a hair salon and spa in Virginia Beach, Va.

Monkitree, a fine art and craft gallery in Gardiner, Maine

Mower Man Lawn Service, a landscaping service in McKinney, Texas

The Mower Shop, an outdoor power equipment shop, in Fort Smith, Ark.

One-Eighty Consignment and Thrift, a consignment and thrift shop in Albion, Pa.

Pop's Biscotti and Chocolates, crafting handmade gourmet chocolates and mini biscotti in Wilbraham, Mass.

Salon VivEsta, Inc., a hair and nail salon in Lansing, Mich.

Scout & Morgan Books, a bookstore in Cambridge, Minn.

Step by Step Dance Studio, a dance studio in Farmingdale, N.Y.

Surviving Sisters Boutique, an eclectic clothing boutique specializing in Made in America merchandise in Hyde Park, N.Y.

The winner of the Indie will be announced Dec. 16.

For more information on AFTERWORDS BOOKS, visit: afterwordsusedbooks.com

For more information on the "Indie" or to vote, visit www.IndieBizAward.com.