

'What's Up Downtown' Tonight In Wood River; Business Alliance Members Discuss Growth

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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WOOD RIVER - Members of the Wood River Business Alliance shared more about the growth of the organization and the city itself just ahead of the “What's Up Downtown” event in Wood River tonight, Thursday, March 28, 2024, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Wood River Library.

Kristen Burns and Jonas Cathey with the Wood River Business Alliance appeared on [Our Daily Show! On Riverbender.com](http://OurDailyShow!OnRiverbender.com) to share more about the organization and the upcoming What's Up Downtown event.

Burns said the event has been running for about a year and described it as a “super casual way for businesses and residents to meet” to network together and showcase “what’s happening downtown.” However, she added the event is open to anyone inside or outside of Wood River who wants to learn more.

“We have tons of growth happening downtown, which is very exciting,” Burns said. “We have new businesses coming in, we have old businesses that are doing amazing things, and we want to make sure that we’re highlighting all of that.

“We want our residents - and people that are outside of Wood River - we want them to know all the cool things that are happening in our downtown.”

She said most drivers go right past downtown Wood River on Illinois Route 143, and hopes the Wood River Business Alliance can encourage more motorists to make a turn and discover what they city’s downtown has to offer.

The Wood River Business Alliance was formerly known as Wood River Economic Development. Burns explained the organization shed its former name for something more in line with their goals for the area.

“We really wanted to change the name to reflect what we were really doing,” Burns said. “Yes, we’re there to develop and we’re there for economic growth ... but we’re really there for the businesses that are already there, too. There’s so many opportunities that we can offer.”

Burns described her experience with the group as a “whirlwind,” but one that’s “exciting and fun.”

“It has been a whirlwind, but it has been exciting and fun, and seeing more and more growth, it’s just outstanding,” she added.

As the owner of Rachel & Company Coffee House, Cathey said his experience as a small business owner in Wood River allows him to help other business owners in the area.

“I had to jump in,” he said of the Business Alliance. “With me being a small business down there as well, it’s beneficial for everybody. I can utilize my expertise in business to help new businesses coming in with what I can help with.”

Cathey, who said he attended Wood River schools, found love in Wood River, and laid his family’s roots in Wood River, added he’s “blessed” to be able to invest in the community he came from. He hopes his five children will one day go on to be Wood River business owners as well, securing a new generation of growth for the city.

“It gives us a chance to teach them how to be entrepreneurs and businesswomen and how to grow in the community, and how important it is to give back,” Cathey said. “That’s the motto we’re doing, that’s who we are, and that’s where it’s going to stay.”

He also said the Business Alliance welcomes “everybody, across the board,” including everyone from community members to owners of large, corporate businesses.

For more information about the Wood River Business Alliance, the upcoming What’s Up Downtown in Wood River, and much more, check out the full interview with Burns and Cathey at the top of this story or on [Riverbender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video).