

The Downtown Mural Project

Join us in our cause to beautify and bring the arts to Downtown Rantoul! We are fundraising and finalizing plans for The Downtown Mural Project. Implementation is scheduled for late Spring. For more information or to make a donation, contact the RACC office, visit us online, or attend one of our monthly Downtown Association meetings.

USO Dance

The annual USO Dance will take place March 31st. Veteran recognition forms are now available until March 24th. Make reservations for the event by calling 217-893-3323 or email office@rantoulchamber.com. The cost is \$20.00 per person and \$35.00 per couple. The RTHS Jazz band will be providing the “big band” sounds and proceeds will benefit our new Student “Salute to Service” Scholarship. Sponsors include the Rantoul Exchange Club, Rantoul Rotary Club, the Rantoul American Legion Post 287, the Urbana American Legion Post 71, the Rantoul VFW Post 6750, the Regional Veterans Memorial, and RACC.

The PoPUp by RACC

The Rantoul Area Chamber of Commerce is happy to provide this new opportunity! It's a way to drive business to Downtown Rantoul while allowing exposure for products that one would normally have to leave the area to find or order online. It also offers local consumers something new to experience! You never know, one might even consider moving in to the neighborhood! We love our Downtown and know that they will too! Floor and window space is available. We ask that contact be made to RACC for vendor agreements and details.

As part of this program, join us in welcoming Anela Boutique! Some of you may have experienced their wonderful selections via the Rantoul Fall Festival, Covered Bridge Festival, or at the Vintage Stockyard Market. They offer women's apparel, leggings, boots/shoes, purses, jewelry, and other accessories. Their one of a kind styles will have you ready for the Spring season in no time!

Find them inside the RACC office, Downtown Rantoul, at 120 E. Sangamon Ave. from February 27th to March 11th. Shopping hours of operation during the two week event will be from 9:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. Monday through Friday, and Saturdays from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Downtown Marketing Map

RACC has made a new home within Downtown Rantoul and is working with the Village of Rantoul's Economic Development office to market the district. The Façade Improvement and Microloan Programs have been put in place by the Village to promote incentive. The Downtown Association has also been a determining factor to develop a plan while working from a template called “Doing Downtown Differently”. To date, as part of the Rantoul Tomorrow Initiative, we have examined issues relating to clean up, infrastructure, security, zoning, marketing, and promotion. Accomplishments relating to clean

up efforts and infrastructure include lighting and patchwork, implementation of bike paths, replacement of fixtures, new banners, and beautification measures in implementing a flower island program as well as annual maintenance of the Constitution Grove area.

In conjunction with the areas mentioned previously, marketing and promoting the area is becoming a reality in terms of having a unified plan and effort. At the beginning of March, we will be able to provide a cohesive strategy and outline to those interested in investment within Downtown Rantoul, whether they are beginning a business from the ground up or have been in business for over 40 years. They will have access to building availability (rent or for sale), local contractors, business related entities, processes and orders of procedures, and much more within this comprehensive guide.

Chamber members will be highlighted, local real estate agents will have a base to work from, and the Village, as well as those within the Downtown district will be armed with something to provide direction and understanding as the area grows. More information will be released next month as efforts continue to move forward and access to the Downtown Marketing Map will also be available through the RACC office.

Where We Are Today

Current membership: 196 paid investors – down 16% since renewals were requested last Fall. This includes 20 Welcome Program Sponsors and 7 Annual Event Sponsors.

29 % of our membership consists of businesses not primarily located in Rantoul.

Since assuming my role in 2014, the events facilitated by RACC (or that RACC aided in the facilitation of include:

Creation of an Annual Euchre Tournament

Bringing Business After Hours into RTHS

Quarterly Breakfasts

Downtown Association's Downtown Coffee

The Realtor's Experience

Candidates Forum (continuation)

Lunch & Learn Series

USO Dance (scholarships available this year and Salute to Service awards for Veteran recognition)

Kelly-Miller Circus

Movies in the Park (continuation and expansion)

Freedom Celebration (continuation and expansion with vendors, appropriate insurances and permits)

Rantoul Rumble on the Runway

All Area 5k Circuit (continuation)

Rantoul Farmers Market (market creation and past management)

Half Century of Progress Show (continuation, organization efforts and meeting facilitation)

Miss & Little Miss Fall Fest Pageant (scholarships available)

Rantoul Fall Festival & Backyard BBQ Cook-Off

Annual Banquet & Fundraiser Auction (continuation, expansion/growth)
Teacher's Appreciation BAH (resurrection)
Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting in Constitution Grove

In addition to those, RACC has also brought the following projects to fruition:

Beautification of Constitution Grove and Downtown Cleanup
Façade improvement and office renovation / investment at 120 E. Sangamon Ave.
Billboard repair and use by the membership coming soon!
Downtown Association (continuation)
Partner in the Rantoul Tomorrow Initiative
Serving in an advisory role to our Village's liquor commission to update licensing and permitting information and application processes for local events and new business (Veteran's Beer Tent at Wabash Park)

While creating these opportunities, we continually research for potential new investors and partnerships (UBA, Paxton Chamber) so we can promote our mission and purpose as it relates to the support business, education as well as social and community activities.

As we've rebranded ourselves, we are utilizing more tools to spread the word about our members. We are creating a structure and consistency in our advertising via social media, print and radio to promote our visual and auditory brands – which will, in turn, become a recognizable piece that will transition listeners to consumers.

Our volunteer base has grown to 88 reliable and driven individuals that help us in every way. Since last April, these local heroes have given more than 846 hours of service to our community via RACC's ongoing programming and projects.

We have also guided local non-profits and member businesses to available resources to generate success within our service area.

We operate from an annual budget of approximately \$125,000. Our current dues income only provides for 30% of our operational expenses not covering payroll costs and tax liabilities for 2 staff members. The difference is fundraised by the staff throughout the fiscal year via event sponsorships collected and new members recruited.

Since staff turnover in 2014, we have streamlined a number of programs, enabled new revenue sources and cut costs dramatically without passing on any additional expenses to our membership. The dues structure from which we base our programming currently has not seen any incremental increases in 25 years. Our survival is possible based solely on the generosity of the membership. We plan to make a modest adjustment later this year to our structure so we can provide added benefits to our membership while maintaining the standard we've built in programming and supporting our staff. Nothing makes us more proud than knowing we are one of the oldest chambers in the area as we enter our 93rd year in 2017.