

# ANNUAL REPORT

2024

Union County **CEO**<sup>®</sup>





# MISSION

**The mission of Union County CEO is to provide a comprehensive educational experience by offering real world information and skill development activities so that our students will become leaders and entrepreneurial thinkers who contribute to the economic development and sustainability of our community.**



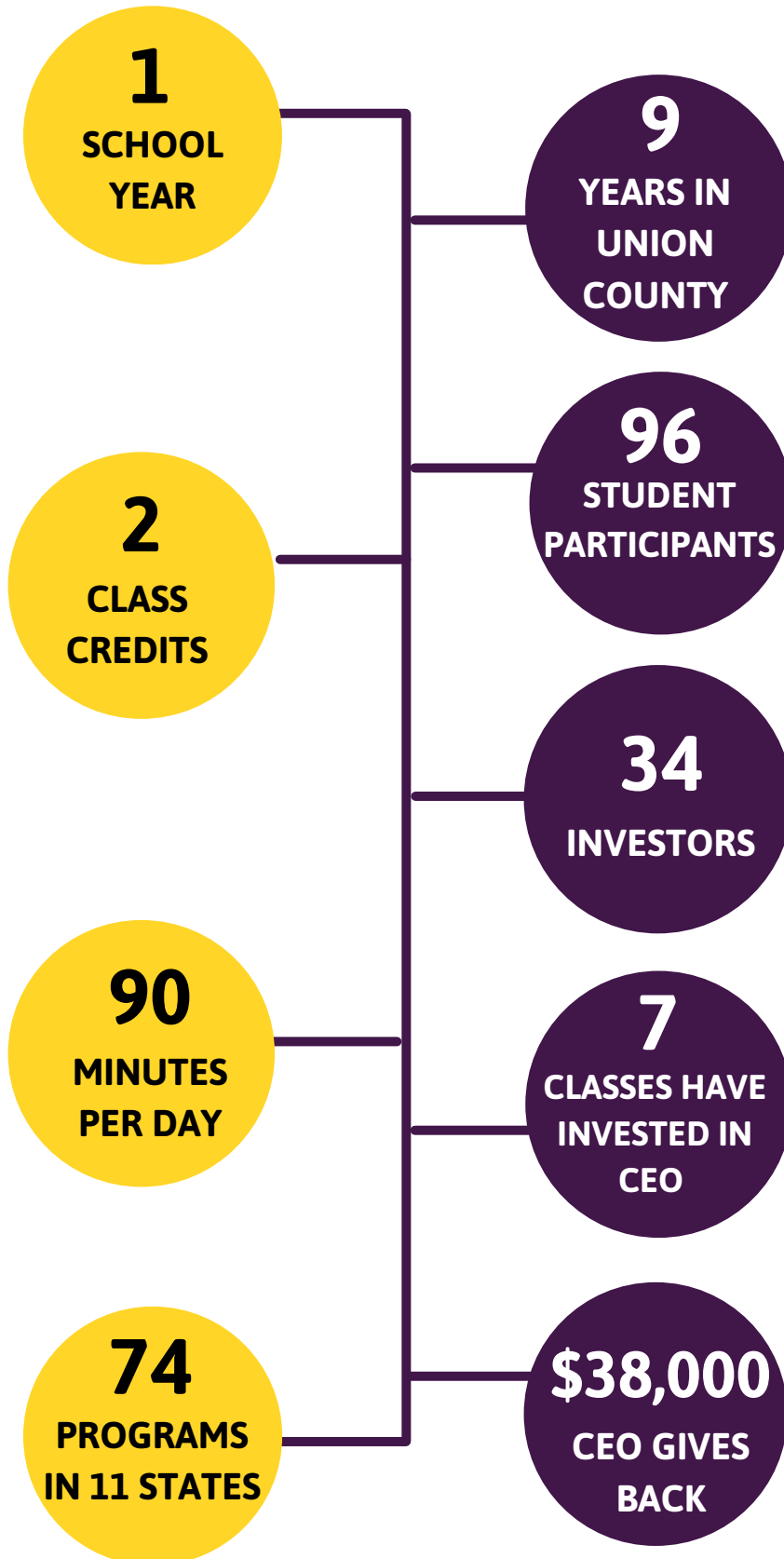
# WHAT IS CEO?

**Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) is an economic development program transforming Union County by growing our own next generation of leaders who appreciate the area and what it has to offer. Students participate in this unique learning experience for one school year. They visit area businesses, create and implement a class business, and develop business plans to start and operate their own small business as part of the CEO curriculum.**



**CEO is fully funded by individuals, organizations, and business investors. These investments allow the program to prepare the next generation of leaders to make a positive impact in their community, workplace, and area of expertise.**

# Key Program Stats





# MELANIE SMITH

## *Program Facilitator*

Finishing up year four as the UCCEO facilitator fills me with gratitude and excitement.

Gratitude that we have completed another successful year with an amazing group of students that inspired, encouraged and challenged me, and, excitement for what next year will bring.

Gratitude for seeing those students grow personally, professionally and academically, and, excited to see how the class of 2025 will grow in those ways next year.

Gratitude for the investors and friends who continuously contribute to our program with needed financial support and generously giving of their time and other resources, and, excitement for the new investors and friends who have seen the positive impact of UCCEO on our students and community and who have decided to partner with us in continuing our work.

Gratitude for all of the amazing speakers and business owners who welcomed us into their businesses and shared their time and experience with us, and, excitement as I look forward to seeing what they have accomplished by next year's visit and possibly adding new visits and speakers to our list.

Gratitude to our dedicated board members and mentors who honor their commitment by attending meetings, events, and classes to show support and encouragement to our students, work to grow and improve our program, and lead by example, and, excitement to see what they are working on implementing next year and what new mentors may join the ranks.

Gratitude for the amazing county that we call home which is filled with more businesses than we can visit in a year, and, excitement to watch it experience new growth and development in the future.

It is an honor and a privilege to be a part of this program and work with the amazing students who are selected each year, as well as the many people who help make this program thrive.

I truly am filled with gratitude for what has been, and so much excitement for what is to come. Thank you, CEO Friends and Family for the legacy of the UCCEO program and the future.

*Melanie*





# BOARD MEMBERS

Angela Boyd, Chair

Dr. Cody Hubble, Secretary

Stephanie Cox, Treasurer

Evelyn Bailey

Hunter Boyd

Kathy Bryan

Grant Capel

Mindy Carter

Mark Chamness

Chris Clark

Scott Finders

Beth Marks

Meghan Norris

April Reiman

Dr. Ellie Rush

Lisa Tomazzoli



# INVESTORS

We are extremely grateful for the generous support of our investors. Their support allows the mission and tradition of the CEO Program to continue in Union County. THANK YOU!

Anna Jonesboro Community High School  
Anna Jonesboro National Bank  
Anna Jonesboro Water Commission  
Anna State Bank  
William and Evelyn Bailey  
City of Anna  
Class of 2021  
Class of 2022  
Class of 2023  
Cobden Civic Industrial Foundation  
Cobden High School  
Country Financial- Charlotte Clover, Mike Meisenheimer, Travis Holtkamp  
Dodd Architects  
ET Simonds Construction  
Edward Jones-Tommy Colboth, Rick Johnson, Phillip McGrath, Kelli Wood  
Grassy Lake Hunting Club - Collin Cain

Independent Living Services, Inc.  
Mike and Kathy Stegle  
Moreland Eye Care  
Penninger Asphalt Paving, Inc.  
ROI Biologicals, LLC.  
Rusty's Home Center  
Schaefer Enterprises  
SIU Credit Union  
Southern Illinois Healthcare  
Taylor, Dodd and Wood Insurance  
Trainor Ag Products LLC.  
Union County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development  
Union County Government  
Union County Hospital  
Union County Women in Business  
Whitney Accounting  
Zee and Lisa Tomazzoli



# FRIENDS

Friends of CEO offer their time as consultants, space for meetings, donations of resources or financial support to provide our students with invaluable opportunities. THANK YOU!

- Bruce Bell
- Angela and Chris Boyd, The Goddard Place
- Cobden Lions Club
- Elaine Crain
- Kiwanis Club of Anna
- Schaefer Excavating--Colton and Alyssa Penrod
- Southern FS
- State Farm-Brad Donna
- Geof Skinner
- Hannah Prendergast Photography
- The Davie School Inn-Lyle and Tammy Woodrum
- The Gazette Democrat
- The Villa-Pizza Villa
- SchoolHouse Cheesecakes - Shane and Jennifer Osman
- Steven Wiseman
- Larry and Mindy Carter





# HOME BASE

Our homebase partners provide space for team meetings. These locations become our meeting space on days we have guest speakers, work on the class business or projects, and host fun team building activities. Thank you for the hospitality!

- Union County Farm Bureau
- Grassy Lake Hunting Club
- Schaefer Excavating
- Jonesboro City Hall
- The Villa-Pizza Villa





# BUSINESS VISITS AND SPEAKERS

Grassy Lake Hunting Club - Collin Cain  
Anna Farmers Market  
Steven Wiseman, Rise Performance  
Union County Fair - Mike & Marilyn Meisenheimer  
Bill Ecker, State Farm Insurance  
Curt's Classics - Curt Walker  
Bill & Evelyn Bailey, Retired Educators  
Jennifer Wendt, First Mid Bank & Trust  
Flamm Orchards - Jeff Flamm, Austin Flamm, Parker Flamm  
Union County Farm Bureau - Kenzie Dillow  
Lambdin Farms - Randy, Matt & Eric Lambdin  
Peachbarn Winery & Cafe - Scott & Jenny Schroeder  
Starview Vineyards - Regina & Brett Morrison  
Rendleman Orchards - Michelle Sirls  
Angela Boyd, First Mid Bank & Trust  
AJ Water Commission - Casey Johnson  
Rusty's Home Center - Rusty Flamm & Jason Stegle  
Bison Bluff Farms - Margaret Kruse  
Sydney Waters - Better Business Bureau  
ET Simonds - Beck Simonds  
Anna Quarry Inc - Will Pyatt  
Schaefer Enterprises - Cody Levan  
Bald Knob Cross - Jena Guined  
Elevated Ag - Brock Buckner  
Havisham House - Jeri Schaefer  
Havisham Bourbon, Brew & Spirits - Jeri Schaefer  
Kenz Boutique - Diana Howell  
Farmers Daughter Boutique - Brandy Renshaw  
Nalee Rae's Boutique & Home Decor - Betsy Oxford  
Susan Odum, U of I Extension Specialist in Community Economic Development  
Chris Egelston, Community Engagement Leader, Midland Institute  
Whitney Accounting - Mark Chamness  
Annabelle Market - Crystal Houseman & Sherri Agers

Rolling Oak Alpaca Ranch - Judy Hopker & Morgan Stevenson  
WIBH Radio - Moury & Nancy Bass  
Kristy Sayers, Midland Institute  
Dori Bigler, Anna City Administrator  
Honey Heist Mead Co - Jackie Robinson  
The Villa-Pizza Villa - Josh Stegle  
Michael Jessup - SIU SBDC  
Melissa Ray Roach - SIU SBDC  
First Class Cookies - Sharon Laster & Teresa Goddard  
AJ National Bank - Melanie Lasley  
Senator Dale Fowler  
Anna State Bank - Jon Vicenzi  
ROI Biologicals - Cody Goins & Chasity Chotner  
Doc's Lakeside Cabin - Tanya Loveless  
Taylor Dodd & Wood, Brad Dodd  
Dodd Architects, Ryan Dodd  
Union County Women in Business  
Penninger Asphalt - Michael & Amy Penninger  
Union County Hospital - Harry Brockus  
Lotus Naturescapes- Mike McLane & Rhonda Tweedy  
SIU Credit Union - Kim Babington  
Country Financial -Charlotte Clover, Mike Meisenheimer & Travis Holtkamp  
City of Anna - Dori Bigler, Jessica Roberts, Bryan Watkins, Gary Dahmer  
Coffman Martial Arts - Heather Coffman & Robert Cutrell  
Union County Clerk - Lance Meisenheimer  
Union County Treasurer - Leigh Burns  
Union County Supervisor of Assessments, Tammy Robinson  
Union County Chairman of the Commissioners - Max Miller  
Union County State's Attorney - Tyler Tripp  
Shawnee Hills Lavender - Charlotte & Doug Clover  
Edward Jones -Kelli Wood, Tommy Colboth, Phillip McGrath, Rick Johnson  
Shawnee Bluffs Canopy Tour - Marc & Candy Miles  
SI Now - Debi Jones Barnett & Nick Holdinghausen  
Shawnee Professional Services - Billy Abernathy





## KAYLIE ADAMS

Kaylie Adams is a 2024 graduate of Cobden High School where she participated in a variety of clubs and activities. She was the Beta Club Secretary, and the 4H President, and participated in Cheer, Theater, and Girl Scouts. In her free time, she enjoys reading books, being with friends, going on new adventures, and playing with her puppy.

Kaylie plans on attending Kentucky Wesleyan College in Owensboro, Kentucky. She will major in Theater Arts with a focus in Directing and a minor in English. She plans to become a theater director for a local school back here in Union County.

Kaylie Adams is the owner and CEO of Kaylie's Creations. Kaylie's Creations is an affordable, durable, and sustainable option for your crochet and keychain needs. Products are made to order and/or readily available for customer's needs. Special orders for other products are always welcome! You can find Kaylie's Creations on Facebook at 'KayliesCreations' and Instagram at 'kaylie\_s\_creations'.

"My biggest takeaway from CEO has been learning about how our community works and how it is so vital to work together to help our county grow. Learning about how Southern Illinois is starting to grow and how I can help, even as a young adult, is a huge deal. Not only to me but to everyone around me too. It helps each student in the schools grow. It helps our county get better equipment to serve the community. Learning about how the community works, helps the community work better together. CEO has taught me so much about where I live, and I have grown to appreciate my time in Union County more and more every day."

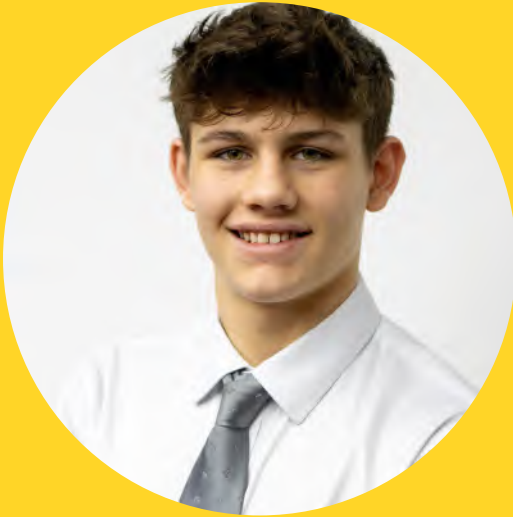


## LAKELYN CARTER

Lakelyn Carter graduated from Anna-Jonesboro where she participated and captained the volleyball and soccer teams. In addition, she participated in Mu Alpha Theta, Beta Club, Educators Rising, and FCCLA while also being senior class treasurer. In her free time, she enjoys being with her family, hiking, and baking. Lakelyn plans to go to Southeast Missouri State University and major in sports management. With this degree, she plans to become an athletic director or work with a professional sports team.

Breezy Berries is a chocolate covered strawberry business located in Union County, IL. It is locally owned and operated by Lakelyn Carter. Lakelyn strives to ensure that each and every customer is satisfied. With that in mind, Breezy Berries serves high quality strawberries at an affordable cost for anyone looking for a sweet treat.

"At first, I really didn't know what to expect from CEO. Looking back on everything we have done this year, is amazing. CEO is truly a once in a lifetime experience. I have had the opportunity to do more things in this class than I have in my entire high school career. I've learned so many life skills that I will carry with me in my future. However, I think the most amazing thing is how much of an impact the CEO program has on me, my friends, and the community. I've grown so much as a person being in this program and I have been able to witness my peers do the same. Not only are they my peers, but it truly does feel like a little CEO family. The impact we have on the community is inspiring. This year we have the privilege to contribute to the building of a new pavilion in downtown Anna, which is amazing for us! CEO has truly enabled me to make a change and I have reaped the benefits of the program."



## DANIEL DOVER

Daniel Dover is a 2024 graduate of Anna-Jonesboro High School. He was the vice president of the National Honor Society, a member of Beta Club, Student Council, and Spanish Club, and participated in soccer and wrestling. Daniel loves spending time with family and friends, camping with his buddies, and playing pickleball. After graduation, he plans to attend John A. Logan College to pursue a career in construction management/architecture.

Daniel Dover is the owner and founder of PickleSweatsco. PickleSweats offers stylish, comfortable, and functional pickleball wearables to increase gameplay experience. The company focuses on selling high-quality clothing and accessories that will build any enthusiast's confidence on or off the court, while also producing products that will help the buyer grow with the pickleball community. Desired items can be purchased through order forms found on Instagram and Facebook at PickleSweats2024.



"CEO is a program like no other. It brings together a group of students and helps them form a team and family. It reveals the best version of yourself. It shows you how professional you can be. The CEO Program turns students into adults. Every day it gives you a routine and gets you pumped up for the rest of the day. It lays down the important steps that lead to the development of a successful, tangible business. The CEO Program brings hope for the future generation of entrepreneurs."



## PRESLI GARNER

Presli Garner is a member of the Class of 2024 at Anna Jonesboro Community High School. She was active in numerous clubs, such as, Student Council, National Honor Society, and Beta Club. After high school, Presli plans to study Sonography at SIUC. She then hopes to become a traveling Sonographer. In her free time, Presli enjoys spending time with friends and family, shopping, and watching her favorite shows.

Presli's Business Designs offers unique products to represent your business. With the option of linked products, Presli's Business Designs can help you take your business to the next level. A linked product is created with the use of a QR code which can be directed to and site of your choosing! With linked business cards, invitation cards, and much more, you can customize your products to your unique taste. These linked products allow customers to share much more information in little to no time. Contact Presli's Business Designs today to share more about your business!



"Being a part of the Union County CEO Program has taught me so many things. I have had the opportunity to learn so much about Union County. There are so many unique businesses and attractions in Union County that I and other CEO students did not know about until visiting them with the CEO Program.

CEO has pushed me out of my comfort zone and forced me to do things I would not have done without the program. For example, public speaking is a large portion of this class. Being required to talk in front of people on a regular basis has helped me to become more comfortable talking to a crowd."



## EVAN HALL

Evan Hall graduated with the Anna Jonesboro Community High School Class of 2024. During his high school career, he was involved in Beta Club, FCA, NHS, and Student Council. He also participated on the football and basketball teams. After graduation, he plans to attend Southeast Missouri State University.

Moose's Classic Cinnamon Rolls provides a product that is freshly baked from scratch. Customers are reached through Facebook, they place their orders, and then a pickup day is held at a set time and location, the SchoolHouse Cheesecake's bakery. The Cinnamon Rolls are baked out of a home kitchen from a family recipe, with a goal to not only satisfy the customer with an amazing Cinnamon Roll but also with great customer service.

"My experience in CEO this year has been nothing short of amazing! I have learned so many valuable life skills like communication, how to work hard, and even how to better manage my time. CEO has given me so many unique experiences that I don't think I could have gotten anywhere else, definitely not in a typical school classroom. It has been so much fun owning and running my own business. It has come with its challenges, but those challenges have taught me many lessons, and have only enhanced those skills that I mentioned above."



## DREW HOLSHOUSER

Drew Holshouser is a graduate of Anna-Jonesboro where he participated in Football and Wrestling. He was also in clubs, including Beta Club, National Honor Society, Student Council, and FCA. In his free time, he enjoys hanging out with friends and family, playing with his dogs, and watching football.

In the future, Drew hopes to wrestle at the collegiate level while he studies mechanical engineering at Southern Illinois University..

Drew's Doghouse is a pet and house-sitting service run by Drew Holshouser. Drew's Doghouse specializes in providing high-quality care for your best friends. Their comfort and safety are the highest priority which is why Drew's Doghouse comes to you to keep your pets feeling their best!

"My biggest takeaway from CEO is how important connections are. There is no way I would know all the people I know now without CEO. These people offer help that is second to none. The connections you make in CEO can last a lifetime and help you at all points through life."



## MATTILYNN HOUSEMAN

Mattilyn Houseman was a member of the graduating class of 2024 at Anna-Jonesboro Community High School. Matti was in a multitude of clubs such as Beta Club, WSAC, and FBLA, as well as being the Secretary of the Art Club. She was also the Drum Major for the Marching Wildcats and the Chief Financial Officer of the 2024 UCCEO class business.

In her free time, Matti loves playing video games with her friends, traveling, and spending time with her family and pets. After graduating, Matti plans to attend SIUC to major in biomedical science and pursue a career as a physician.

Herb & Hearth, a culinary spices and seasoning blend company, is dedicated to enhancing the flavors of every dish. With versatile ingredients and products, you can spice up your everyday snacks and meals with ease. With a passion for quality innovation, they carefully craft each blend with high-quality ingredients to create unique and flavorful seasonings accessible to any consumer. Herb & Hearth's commitment to excellence ensures that each product is crafted with care, offering chefs and home cooks alike the opportunity to experience the joy of cooking.



"Joining the Union County CEO Program has been such an amazing experience for me. Through the program, I have had so many doors opened for me that would have never been possible without the support and opportunities presented to us students. Through CEO, I have met so many amazing people and made lasting connections that will follow with me in the future. The opportunities and support I have received are things I will never forget."



## ALEXANDRIA KELLER

Alexandria Keller is a 2024 graduate of Anna-Jonesboro Community High School, where she was active in cross country, basketball, and soccer. Alex also participated in clubs such as Student Council, FCA, FBLA, National Honor Society, and Beta Club. She served as Student Council President, Class President, and Beta Club Secretary.

In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends and listening to Taylor Swift! Alexandria's plans include going to Murray State University and majoring in Nutrition and Dietetics, with a minor in Business.

Fancy Lou's Tote Company, owned and operated by Alexandria Keller, offers eco-friendly custom-made tote bags. FLTC creates affordable products, while also keeping each product unique.



"The Union County CEO Program has become such a big part of my life. It has helped me grow into the individual that I am today. Throughout this program I have learned so many valuable people skills, budgeting skills, organization tools, and so much more. CEO is an experience that you can't get anywhere else. I am so thankful for having the opportunity to be a part of the Union County CEO 2023-2024 family!"



**THE DASH  
Detail**

## RYAN LIBBERT

Ryan Libbert is a member of the Shawnee High School Class of 2024. While a student at Shawnee, he enjoyed playing baseball and basketball, doing farm work, and odd jobs for some extra cash. Ryan was very active in clubs and organizations as well. He served as the 2023-24 FFA president and was a member of the Beta Club. After high school, Ryan hopes to get a baseball scholarship, but if that doesn't work out, he plans to attend a trade school where he will learn Carpentry, Electricity, or HVAC.

The Dash Detail is a mobile interior detailing service that provides fast, quality detailing at an affordable rate. Being mobile creates a much greater customer interest and satisfies customers' time-saving needs by bringing the service to them. The Dash Detail proudly serves Southern Illinois as well as Cape Girardeau, with plans to continue growing in years to come.

My experience in CEO this year has been amazing. It wasn't fully what I expected it to be, I expected a boring business class but that was not the case at all. As the year progressed, the more fun I started to have as I got to know everyone. At first, we all seemed so different, but soon we realized we all shared similar qualities. We had our fun moments as well as our stressful moments but everyone always seemed to pull through. CEO was everything I ever needed, I have had eye-opening opportunities that I would have never had if it wasn't for CEO. I truly believe that everyone should apply for CEO; many people don't know what they are missing out on.



**kg's  
dehydration  
station**



## KINLEY LINGLE

Kinley Lingle will be a senior at Dongola High School. She participates in volleyball and softball and is also an officer in the FFA chapter. She was the Junior class president and also a member in the Dongola Beta Club. In her time away from school, she works as a waitress and enjoys going on walks.

Kinley's future plans are undecided, but she knows she would like to go into the agricultural field.

KG's Dehydration Station is your one-stop shop for your dehydrated fruit needs! KG's dehydrate different types of fruits to satisfy your sweet tooth including strawberries, bananas, pineapples, and more. Find them on Facebook at KG's Dehydration Station!

"My experience in CEO has truly helped me be a better person in my everyday life. It changed the way I look at my job by understanding the importance of everyone working together to better the business. I have gained more confidence within myself and figured out the person I want to be when I am older. This year has shown me all of the opportunities I have in this small community and has introduced me to people I may not have met otherwise. So thank you, Union County CEO, for seeing the potential in every single one of us!"



## JADYN SAMUELS

Jadyn Samuels is a 2024 graduate of Anna-Jonesboro Community High School. She participated in cheerleading, musical theater, and many clubs at AJ. These clubs include Beta Club, Student Council, FCA, FBLA, and Mu Alpha Theta. Jadyn has many hobbies and enjoys music, art, baking, and spending time with her friends. She has a passion for being creative and plans to take this further in the future and apply it to her career. She plans on going to Shawnee Community College for a dual associate's degree in Art and Science and hopes to get her Bachelor's degree in Film Production.

Searching for jewelry that can help you step up your style? Jadyn's Gems creates unique and custom jewelry pieces that can help you reflect your own personal style. Every piece of Jadyn's Gems jewelry is handmade and one of a kind. Visit Jadyn's Gems at Annabelle Market, on Facebook, on Instagram, or on Tiktok to shop today. Don't miss out on finding your next perfect gem!

"My biggest takeaway from being a part of CEO has been how important making connections can be. Through CEO I have met and worked with so many new and interesting people who have so much amazing insight on anything I could need to know. Growing these close relationships has had a great positive impact on me personally and through my business. I know that through this program I have made connections that will last a lifetime, and I am forever grateful for that."



## ASHLEY SUTLIFF

Ashley Sutliff graduated with the Class of 2024 at Anna-Jonesboro. During her time in high school, she participated in Beta Club, Teen Teachers, Art Club, CYCA, and band. After high school, Ashley plans to attend Southern Illinois University to become a nurse, something she has always been passionate about. In her free time, she enjoys coloring, painting, and hanging out with her friends.

Ashley's Meltaway is a wax melt company owned and operated by Ashley Sutliff. She chose this business because she has always been fascinated with the different varieties of wax scents. To set her business apart from others, she offers different shapes instead of the ordinary cube wax melts that you see at the store.

"My CEO experience has been the best. I have loved getting to see Union County as a whole. The places that we have visited, were completely new to me. It has truly opened my mind to the different possibilities and adventures that you can get in Union County. I joined the program to help with public speaking, and I can definitely say that it has helped me 100%. I am so grateful to be part of this amazing program. I absolutely love everyone who is involved in the program and all the connections that I have made. I cannot wait to see what's in store for me."



## TYSEN TRIPP

Tysen Tripp is a 2024 graduate of Anna-Jonesboro High School. He was a member of the Student Council, Beta Club, National Honor Society, and the Student Advisory Council. He was also the Beta Club's president. Tysen's hobbies include drawing, golfing, and playing video games. After high school, he plans to go to Shawnee Community College and then Southern Illinois University to pursue a career as a lawyer.

Union Print is a 3D Printing product and service provider based in Union County, Illinois, and owned and operated by Tysen Tripp. By utilizing the creative power of 3D printing, Union Print offers unique plastic products designed to fit a customer's specifications via a commission.

"I originally joined CEO on a whim because I had empty space on my class list that I needed to fill. I felt that CEO was the only viable option despite knowing next to nothing about it. This choice ended up changing my life, as CEO embodies actual education instead of the usual mindless schooling that we are used to. Anyone who takes CEO learns and gains more in a single school year than what they will learn and gain from any other school year beyond that. If you are tired of the tests, quizzes, essays, and handouts, then join this program. CEO teaches you how to live life. There is no better class than this one."



## JOSHUA WILLIAMS

Josh Williams is a member of the Class of 2024 at Anna-Jonesboro. During high school, he was involved with Beta Club, Track, and he was a Fellowship of Christian Athletes club leader.

Josh is a videographer and in his free time loves to make/write films. When he graduates, he plans to attend Shawnee Community College to continue his education in business management. He plans on owning his own video production company.

Josh Williams is the owner of JAW Studios. A videography company based out of Southern Illinois, they specialize in commercials/interviews for local businesses and set work for any production. They love to be creative and make really unique stories. Jaw Studios brings years of experience, knowledge, and a love of filmmaking to make your video project. That's why their slogan is, "Your Story, Our Lens". They bring the equipment and skill to capture your story and idea.

"My experience in CEO has been very interesting, and I have definitely gained much knowledge and background about local businesses and how businesses are run in general. It is nice to be around like-minded students who all generally have similar goals. That means that we all see the importance of an active community and supporting citizens."



# Orientation

UCCEO orientation, just like new employee orientation at a business, provides the new students with concise and accurate information to be successful in the CEO Program.

**Thank you to our Orientation host Davie School Inn!**



# Micro Business

The CEO class microbusiness allows team members to start learning about building relationships with the business community and the basics of income and expense as it relates to purchasing team apparel. Team members meet with business leaders asking for their support to purchase the CEO team apparel for this school year. The money earned from this is seed money for the class business and covers the cost of professional logo apparel.

*Written by Drew Holshouser and Evan Hall*

**We would like to thank the following businesses for supporting the 2023-2024 Microbusiness: AJ National Bank, Flamm Orchards, Rendleman Orchards, Rise Performance, Schaefer Excavating, and Rusty's Home center.**





# MENTORS

Mentors play a valuable role in the growth of our program participants. These individuals work with students to discuss plans for personal businesses and other valuable life lessons. Thank you mentors!



**THANK YOU TO OUR MENTOR  
BREAKFAST HOST  
THE VILLA-PIZZA VILLA!**

Dori Bigler  
Keri Clark  
Tommy Colboth  
Stephanie Cox  
Kati Denny  
Brent Goforth  
Chelsey Greenwood  
Mary K Harris  
Travis Holtkamp  
Casey Johnson  
Sharon Laster  
Meghan Norris  
Samantha Smith  
Dr. Timothy Taylor

# Class Business

This year's annual class business continued the tradition of the local sampler Christmas Boxes. The boxes featured items and coupons from local businesses in hopes of encouraging others to shop locally. Our main focus was to showcase and implement everything the Union County has to offer. Thus, "Union County CEO in a Little Package" was born.

The boxes were overflowing with items, coupons, generosity, and support from over fifty local businesses and organizations located right here in Union County! It was overwhelming to witness the community come together to support our class business. Words cannot describe how thankful we are to live in a community that has supported us every step of the way. The class business experience taught us valuable life lessons, such as working collaboratively, staying organized, setting deadlines, and learning how to overcome different challenges. It's an experience that will stay with us for a long time.

**Thank you to everyone who helped make our class business a success!**

Written By: Alexandria Keller





## Jingle and Mingle

Each year, in early December, Union County CEO hosts a Jingle and Mingle event at the P.A.S.T Heritage House in Jonesboro. The home is beautifully decorated for the holidays by the P.A.S.T. volunteers and is a lovely setting for this annual event. This is a time where our alumni, current class, investors, mentors, and friends enjoy time together sharing their stories and memories.

Here's what Lakelyn Carter said about her experience at Jingle and Mingle, "This experience was so fun! Being able to just hang out, talk, and eat is always a good time. It's also so rewarding to look around and see all the alumni and investors in our program. When I was a junior, I had older friends who were in CEO. Hearing what they had to say and seeing the Instagram posts made me want to be part of the program because it looked so fun. I am so happy to say that it is everything I thought it would be. Being part of this program has been such a learning experience. I get to participate in everything I hoped for and more, it has been fantastic. I am so grateful for this opportunity and the people that have helped me along the way."

**Thank you to our Jingle & Mingle host, P.A.S.T.!**

# Year End Field Trip

Each year the class ends with a field trip full of teambuilding and one final business visit. This year the team visited Shawnee Bluffs Canopy Tours and heard the story of how this business came to Union County. After learning about the business, they had the opportunity to experience the joy of ziplining and teambuilding in the canopy of the Shawnee National Forest. Below, Jadyn Samuels shares her experience.

“Walking into the Shawnee Bluffs Canopy Tour, we were immediately met with amazing service and even nicer people! The owners were considerate and more than ecstatic to speak with us and welcome us to their establishment. Mr. Marc Miles and his wife Mrs. Candy Miles, took the time to share about their lives and what it took to bring this business to the area and run the day to day. It was not only amazing to hear how many amazing adventures they had been on, but it was also inspiring to hear how they started an incredible, eco-friendly and safe business right here in Southern Illinois.

Going on the canopy tour was phenomenal as the tour guides made sure you had a fun and exciting time and felt safe while experiencing it. You felt so comfortable and secure that by the end of the trail you didn't want the fun to end. Talking to the tour guides themselves was also refreshing as they let us know about their lives. They all had a passion for this business. It brought them joy and fulfillment getting to work together and have so many fun experiences with the customers. This trip had more in store for us than any of us could have imagined and really was the perfect way to end our year as a class. We all cannot thank the owners and employees at Shawnee Bluffs Canopy Tours enough for taking this time to welcome us into their facility and showing us once again how much there really is to explore right here in our community! “





# All Star Celebration & Trade Show

The final event of each year is the All Star Celebration and Trade Show. Here is what student Ashley Sutliff wrote about her experience.

“The Union County Trade Show took place at The Barn Event Center. It was an incredible opportunity to demonstrate the skills that CEO has instilled throughout the year. I am immensely proud of all the individuals who contributed to the event. Although the setup process for the Trade Show was lengthy and demanding, the end result made it all worthwhile.

CEO has played a significant role in boosting my confidence and enabling me to deliver a speech in front of board members, family, friends, and the upcoming CEO class. My experience at the trade show was truly exceptional. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting a diverse range of individuals who visited my booth and expressed interest in learning more about my business. It was gratifying to showcase my business and share the valuable knowledge I have acquired.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who attended and supported us as entrepreneurs and our business ventures. This experience will forever hold a special place in my heart, and I feel privileged to have been a part of it.”

**Thank you to Carl & Suzanne Dillow for the use of The Barn Event Center!**



CEO is open to any junior or senior who lives in or attends school in Union County. Students are selected via a blind evaluation process after online application submission. If you know of a potential candidate, have them contact their school counselor for more information.

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