

Illinois communities receive Lt. Governor's Awards for Downtown Revitalization

Winners include Batavia, Bloomington, Cambridge, Crystal Lake, Elgin, Genoa, Jacksonville, Moline, Momence, Pontiac, Prophetstown, Quincy, Waukegan

QUINCY – Several Illinois communities received the 2012 Lieutenant Governors Awards for Excellence in Downtown Revitalization during the Illinois Main Street Conference held in the in Quincy. The award winners included Batavia, Bloomington, Cambridge, Crystal Lake, Elgin, Genoa, Jacksonville, Moline, Momence, Pontiac, Prophetstown, Quincy and Waukegan.

The presentation of the Lieutenant Governor's Awards for Downtown Revitalization has been an annual occurrence since 1994, the year after Illinois Main Street was established. Illinois Main Street programs were eligible to submit award nominations for activities completed between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012. A total of 17 awards were presented, four in each of the Main Street points of Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring, and one for Volunteer of the Year. Judges from the three state government entities supporting the Main Street program – the Office of Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency – selected the winners.

“Across the state we see renewed efforts at revitalizing our downtown communities, and the passion and dedication shown by these honorees is inspiring,” Lt. Governor Sheila Simon said. “These honorees exemplify the best of what our state has to offer and remind us that Illinois Main Streets are open for business.”

In August 2009, Main Street Momence was awarded a \$99,000 USDA Rural Development Grant to establish a low-interest, revolving-loan program. Kankakee County provided an additional \$50,000 in local matching funds. The low-interest loan worked in tandem with Main Street Momence's existing facade grant program. Together, the incentive promoted downtown economic development, closed financing gaps, created and retained employment in the downtown, and helped finance a variety of improvements. As a result of the program thus far, 27 full-time jobs and 17 part-time jobs were created or retained. The judges admired how the local Main Street program ambitiously sought a federal grant and saw it through to completion. So far, the results have been exactly what the grant was intended to produce.

Caption for photo

Main Street Momence was honored during Illinois Main Street's Annual State Conference and Awards Banquet in Quincy, Illinois. Thirteen of the nearly 50 Illinois Main Street programs were recognized for their outstanding efforts toward revitalizing and improving their downtown districts. Main Street Momence's Revolving Loan Fund won top honors in the Economic Restructuring Category for their Creation and Administration of the low interest loan program. Shown from left to right are John Sokol, Main Street Momence Economic Development committee member, Laura Hepp Kessel of Lt. Governor Sheila Brown's Office,

Janine Loftus, Executive Director of Main Street Momenca, and Illinois Main Street Coordinator, Christina Rogers. Not shown are Leigh Ann Sokoloff and Mary Shanahan of the MSM Econ Dev Committee who were unable to attend the conference, but who worked diligently on the project.