



VOLUME 31 | ISSUE 2

February 2026

EDITION

LINDA HARPER, EDITOR

FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER



President's Message

Kyle Karsten

2025 is off to a fantastic start, and the momentum is already carrying us forward into an exciting year ahead. Your Chamber has a full calendar of opportunities designed to connect, celebrate, and support our local business community. January gave us the opportunity to celebrate our nonprofit partners at the Nonprofit Appreciation Banquet. It was a wonderful evening, well attended and well received, highlighting the incredible impact nonprofits have in our community. Thank you to our guest speaker, Natalie Beck, from the Heart of Illinois Community Foundation, for being a part of this meaningful event and helping make the evening such a success.

One of our biggest events of the year, the annual Mt. Zion Expo & Taste, is scheduled for March 21, 2026. Early-bird sponsorships and booth registrations are due by February 27, 2026. This event continues to be a favorite for both businesses and the community, offering an excellent opportunity to showcase your products and services. If you own a restaurant, I strongly

continued on [page 3](#)



Mt. Zion EXPO & TASTE

Showcase Your Business—Reserve Your Booth Today

You don't want to miss the upcoming Expo & Taste. It is on March 21, 2026. Early-bird due date for a discount on sponsorships and booths is February 27, 2026. Whether you're looking to showcase your products, services, or innovative ideas, a booth at the Expo is the perfect platform to connect with a broader audience, network with industry professionals, and make lasting impressions.

Why should you sign up for a booth?

- **Visibility:** Gain exposure to a diverse and enthusiastic crowd.
- **Networking:** Meet potential clients, partners, and industry leaders.

continued on [page 3](#)

UPCOMING

FEBRUARY 11th

Luncheon

12:00-1:00

Topic

Decatur Family YMCA

Location

Antioch Christian Church

Caterer

Stix on 36

Member cost \$15

RSVP by Tuesday, Feb. 10th

FEBRUARY 24TH

Mix & Mingle

Bevo's

5-7 p.m.

FEBRUARY 27TH

Early-Bird Expo

Sponsorships &

Booths Due

MARCH 11TH

Luncheon

Millikin's Anniversary Plans

12-1 p.m.

MARCH 13TH

Award Nominations

Due



2025-2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Kyle Karsten
President
Macon Resources Inc.



Jimmy Rade
Vice President
Mossy Oak Properties



Kayla Marsh
Treasurer
Hickory Point Bank & Trust



Laura Cullison
Secretary
Evergreen Senior Living



Ashley Batchelder
Mt. Zion District Library



Trisha Beck
Beck Realtors, Inc.



Ashley Hawkins
Prairie State Bank & Trust



Crystal Hernandez
HDZ Roofing Co.



Tim Robertson
Heartland Bank
and Trust



Linda Harper
Executive Director
Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce



Shelly Coslow
Outgoing Officer Advisor
Decatur Earthmover Credit
Union



February 2026 Luncheon



Our luncheon on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, will be at Antioch Christian Church at 5409 E. US Route 36, Decatur, IL 62521. Registration starts at 11:30 a.m.; the buffet, catered by Stix on 36, starts at 11:45 a.m. The luncheon program begins at 12 noon and ends at 1 p.m. The luncheon cost is \$15.

Shyler Kraus with the Decatur Family YMCA will be our speaker. She will share how the Y goes beyond fitness to strengthen our community, how the Y's nonprofit mission supports youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility and partners with local businesses and organizations to create lasting impact across Macon County.

Enjoy our speaker and a great lunch. Bring your business cards and network. If you have any information fliers you want to put on the luncheon tables before the luncheon begins, then be sure to pick up any remaining fliers at the end of the luncheon.

Please send your RSVP to mtzionilchamber@gmail.com by Tuesday, February 10th or submit your reservation on our website at <https://www.mtzionchamber.org/meetings>. Be sure to send me your RSVP information with all the names of those attending from your business or organization for the Attendee List. You can pay in advance at [Event Registration - Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce \(chamberorganizer.com\)](#); or optionally, you can still be invoiced or pay at the door.

President's Message continued from [page 1](#):

encourage you to participate in the Taste and share your offerings. This year's Expo is shaping up to be another outstanding event, and we don't want you to miss out.

Looking ahead, awards season is quickly approaching. Be sure to find the information to submit a nomination for our Chamber Awards. We hope you will plan to attend the Awards Banquet planned for April 23, 2026, where we will recognize the individuals and businesses that make our community thrive.

As always, your Chamber is here for you. One of the best ways to promote your business and maximize your membership is to get involved—attend monthly luncheons, join us for after hours events, participate in Ribbon Cuttings, or consider hosting a Business After Hours. We truly enjoy seeing our members engaged and are always here to support you in any way we can. Thank you for being an active part of our Chamber and helping make our community strong.

Warm regards,
Kyle Karsten, President

Mt. Zion Expo & Taste: Showcase Your Business—Reserve Your Booth Today continued from [page 1](#):

- **Growth:** Present your offerings to a larger audience and expand your reach.
- **Innovation:** Highlight your unique solutions and stand out from the competition.

We want you to be a part of this great event to showcase your products, services, or innovative ideas. A booth at the Expo is the perfect platform to connect with a broader audience, network with industry professionals, and make lasting impressions. See [page 7](#) for sponsorship and booth information.



Announcements



2026 –2028 Board Slate

In accordance with the By-Laws of the Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce, President Kyle Karsten appointed a Nominating Committee, which has submitted the following list of eligible candidates to fill five (5) two-year vacancies that will exist at the close of May 31, 2026. Only one vote is allowed per membership (business or organization) and the member must be in good standing at the time of election. The election will be held at the March 11, 2026 luncheon. Here are the four names that have been nominated for the term of June 1, 2026—May 31, 2028 Board of Directors; *indicates incumbents (second consecutive two-year term):

Shane Bracken	J. J. Swartz Co.
Kyle Karsten*	Macon Resources Inc.
Angie Manns	Decatur Earthmover Credit Union
Karalee Misner	The Solver Group



2026 Expo & Taste Sponsorships & Booths

Our 2026 Expo & Taste Sponsorship Packages on [page 6](#) for the 2026 Expo & Taste on Saturday, March 21, 2026 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The due date to order and pay for an Early Bird Price is February 27, 2026. I can invoice you. The committee has been working on putting on a great Expo & Taste with interactions with attendees, contests, stage shows, and food. It is the two weeks before Easter. You won't want to miss this fun 2026 Expo & Taste! Email mtzionchamber@gmail.com. The Expo contract and the Taste contract are included in this newsletter. See [pages 7 & 8](#) and on our website at <https://www.mtzionchamber.org/MZCevents>.



2026 Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce Award Nominations

Please submit your 2025 award nominations by March 13, 2026 for each of the following categories:

- ◆ Outstanding Business of the Year Award
- ◆ Non-Profit of the Year Award
- ◆ New Business of the Year Award
- ◆ NExT Award

See [pages 10 & 11](#).



Celebrate Your Milestone in 2026

The Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce is proud to recognize member businesses and organizations celebrating milestone anniversaries this year—whether it's 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 or more years of service and success. If your business is marking a milestone in 2026, let us know! Please submit your 2026 milestone anniversaries for your business or organization by April 6, 2026 by emailing mtzionchamber@gmail.com your business name and founding year. Besides celebrating the award nominees and award winners at our Awards Banquet on April 23, 2026, we will be also celebrating any our member's milestone anniversaries. Let's honor your legacy and inspire others in our community.



Announcements continued from [page 5](#):

Congratulations!

Winner of Non-Profit Appreciation Banquet Drawing

The participating non-profit organization that won our 10% of the profit from the event was Alzheimer's Association; Heart of Illinois Community Foundation also awarded our winner \$1,000. Natalie Beck was our speaker from HICF. She held an audience participation contest where the winner won \$4,000; the winner was Macon Resources Inc.

2026 MZCC Scholarships



Each year the Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce awards scholarships. If you have a high school graduate this year, share the scholarship application in this newsletter. Any employee's seniors of any of our member businesses or organizations may apply. Your graduating high school senior either needs to be a Mt. Zion High School student; or if attending another high school, they must



Mix & Mingle

Our evening social, networking event called Chamber on the Rocks has been renamed Mix & Mingle. Attendees at the Christmas luncheon filled out a survey to rename it. Mix & Mingle will be the last week of the months of February, April, June, August, and September. The day of the week will change and different times will be set. Each Mix & Mingle will have a chance to win a gift card. The first Mix & Mingle will be at Bevo's on February 24, 2026 from 5-7 p.m.



Luncheon Host

The Luncheon Host costs \$250. Your logo as luncheon host will be on communications, in the newsletter, and on our website regarding the luncheon. You will have a table to display your signage and materials, can put materials on the other tables, and talk for 5-10 minutes about your business or organization. Your luncheon is complimentary. You provide a door prize. There is no Exhibitor the month that there is a Luncheon Host. Email Linda at mtzionilchamber@gmail.com if you are interested in becoming a Luncheon Host.

Welcome New Members



The Heart of Illinois Community Foundation awards grants and scholarships. They can create a charitable giving solution that meet your unique goals. HICF matches your charitable giving goals with the community's wish list in the following counties: Macon, Moultrie, and Piatt. Call 217.429.3000 for an appointment. Visit Heartofillinois.org for more information.



Nidal Events serves Illinois and beyond—creating unforgettable moments, wherever you are. They offer DJ and MC services, dance floor lighting, full ceremony audio coverage, digital photo booth, and more. Nidal Events can provide music, lighting, and atmosphere to weddings, corporate events, private parties, and school dances. Visit [Nidal Events](http://NidalEvents.com). Call 217.855.1568.



Expo Taste

Mt. Zion Convention Center
March 21, 2026

Gold or Silver Sponsorship Packages Due March 6, 2026

Early Bird Sponsorships & Booths Payment Due **February 27, 2026**

	Gold Sponsorship \$650	Silver Sponsorship \$400	Booth Space \$250/Early \$200 <i>Non Member: \$425/Early \$375</i>
Booth space	Two 8x8 booths Electricity included	8/8 booth Electricity available \$25	8/8 booth Electricity available \$25
Sponsor Promotion	Designated as Gold Sponsor at Event	Designated as Silver Sponsor at Event	
Sponsor publicity	Sponsor name announced at Event	Sponsor name announced at Event	
Sponsor Inclusion	Sponsor name and logo on all Expo communications.	Sponsor name and logo on Expo communications.	
Sponsor inclusion in Pre-Expo event advertisement	Sponsor logo on Expo flyer & newspaper ad. Sponsor logo on all Expo email and social media messages. Email blast your ad & on Chamber Facebook page.	Sponsor name on Expo flyer Email blast your ad	
Early Bird Pricing If registered and paid before Feb. 27, 2026	\$600	\$350	\$200 member \$375 non member

Business Name & Contact Name: _____

Gold: _____ Silver: _____ How Many Booths: _____ Electricity: _____

Email: mtzionilchamber@gmail.com

Mail Payment to: P.O. 84, Mt. Zion, IL 62549



Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce 2026 EXPO Contract

Show Date: March 21, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Mt. Zion Convention Center

Set Up Date: Mar. 20, 2026 | 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Booth Space: 8' x 8'

Fee: Early Bird Non-Member \$375 or Early Bird Member \$200 per booth space, if registered by Feb. 27, 2026.

After Feb. 27, 2026 booth space will be allocated on a first-come first-serve basis at

Non-Member Price of \$425 or Member Price \$250. Registration Form & Payment Due by Mar. 6, 2026.

(Non-member price for both Early Bird and non-Early Bird includes membership.)

- All Early Bird booth contracts and checks must be received by **Feb.27, 2026** to retain a discounted booth space.
- All exhibitors must restrict their exhibit to the business registered with the Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce.
- All multiple businesses that are Chamber members, must register each business they wish to exhibit.
- Doors will be open for setup on Friday, March 20, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

All exhibitors are to be set up by 5:00 p.m.

- Exhibitors will park the day of the Expo to the immediate north & east of the Convention Center on March 21, 2026.
- Exhibitors will **NOT** remove their display before 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 21, 2026.
- Exhibitors will **NOT** sell any illegal items.
- Exhibitors will remove all trash, paper, boxes, tape, etc. from their space.
- Exhibitors will cooperate with all requests of show personnel.
- Exhibitors **MUST** keep display within confines of their space and not go into the aisles.
- The Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce or the Mt. Zion Convention Center will not be held liable for any losses, damages or injuries sustained by exhibitors in any manner whatsoever.
- No refunds or credits for cancellations for any reason after Mar. 6, 2026.
- Exhibitors will be supplied (1) table, (2) chairs, table cloth, pipe and drape on three sides.

You must supply extension cords and display accessories. Wall booth spaces are for booths that need electrical outlets.

Electrical Booth space will be available to those who pay the \$25.00 fee.

- Door prizes can be announced during the Expo. It is suggested that you arrange for door prize and sign-ups and/or drawings at your booth.
- All Chamber exhibitors must be a member in good standing at the time of the Expo with dues paid in full; the 2026 membership dues is due January 15, 2026.
- For questions or special requests, please call the Chamber at 217-864-2526.
- Make checks payable to: Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce. Mail to: P.O. Box 84, Mt. Zion, IL 62549.

Return The Bottom Half With Your Payment

Business Name (Please Print)

Contact Person (Please Print)

Phone

Electricity: Yes No (110v)

Note: There is an additional \$25 charge for booth electricity.

Booth: Business Taste Electricity

Early Bird Non-Member \$375 or \$200 Member per booth price. After Feb. 27, 2026, price for Non-Member \$425 or Member \$250 per booth.

Mail to:

Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 84
Mt. Zion, IL 62549



2026 TASTE Contract

Do not miss this opportunity to serve one of your delicious entrees to the crowd of local residents attending the EXPO & TASTE on Saturday, March 21, 2026.

Setup is Saturday, March 21st from 9 A.M. to 10:30 A.M.

- NO CHARGE to MZCC for Taste Booth for Chamber members – Booth size 8 x 8. One 6 ft. table and table skirting provided.
- Serve time: 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Required to stay the whole time. If you run out of food, please make arrangements to have more brought to you.
- Each booth provides a minimum of 200 samples (small serving) for one ticket. Bring a small container to put the tickets you collect in.
- Each booth provides necessary serving items (extension cords, napkins, plates, forks, etc.).
- Small table sign listing your sample or samples if you have more than one choice.
- Taste tickets will be for sale the day of the event at the Mt. Zion Chamber Booth only in packs of 5 tickets for \$8.
- **Vendors will be reimbursed \$1.00 for each ticket turned in by 2:00 p.m.**

If you would like to be part of the TASTE, please complete the attached reservation and return by mail: PO BOX 84, Mt. Zion, IL or email: mtzionilchamber@gmail.com by Mar. 6, 2026.

BOOTH RESERVATION

Business Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____



Submit your nominations or download the Awards Nomination Form at <https://www.mtzionchamber.org/award-nominations>.

SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATIONS TODAY



OUTSTANDING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

NEW BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

NON-PROFIT OF THE YEAR

NEXT AWARDS

NOMINATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 13, 2026



2025 ANNUAL AWARDS NOMINATION FORM

The Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce is honored to celebrate our chamber members' achievements each year. Our awards are: Outstanding Business of the Year Award, Volunteer of the Year Award, New Business of the Year, Non-Profit of the Year, The President's Award of Excellence, and The NExT Award. These awards recognize the achievements of our Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce members. We need your nominations for the 2025 awards by March 13, 2026; you can fill them in on this form or online at <https://www.mtzionchamber.org/award-nominations>. Fill out as many of the nominations as you wish. The winners of all six 2025 awards will be presented at the 2026 Annual Awards Banquet on April 23, 2026. Also, all top nominees for the Outstanding Business of the Year, New Business of the Year, and Non-Profit of the Year will be highlighted with a special video during the Awards Banquet.

Any employee of a MZCC Business or Organization is eligible to submit a nomination. Nominations must be for a Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce Business or Organization; for individual awards, the nomination must be for an employee of a Mt. Zion Chamber Business or Organization. Our online [Member Directory](#) has a complete list of our members with all their business and contact information: click on the Member Directory on our website menu. There is a complete membership directory list of only the business names and organizations by going to <https://www.mtzionchamber.org/membership-list>.

Complete each form below to cast your nomination. Please complete the Reason(s) field. Nominating of one's own self or one's own business is not permitted. Nominations that have nothing in the Reason(s) portion, will not be considered. Online each award form has its own Submit button. The Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce Executive & Finance will review all nominations and select the winners. The winners will be announced at the Annual Awards Banquet on April 23, 2026. Whether you fill out one or more nominations below, you must fill out the section called *Nominator's Section* on page 2. Also see the *Instructions for Nomination Submission Section* at the bottom of page 2.

Outstanding Business of the Year

The Outstanding Business of the Year Award is awarded to the Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce business that has the most positive economic impact and/or support for the community. This business should also show established or potential longevity in the community, and continual support/service to the chamber. (If member business or organization has won this award in the past, they can be nominated again if it has been five years.) [Click here to see past winners](#).

Business Nomination _____

Reason(s) _____

New Business of the Year

The New Business of the Year Award is in recognition of a business that has joined the Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce within the last 12 months and has had a positive economic impact and/or supports the community. For a list of all 2025 New Members: <https://www.mtzionchamber.org/2025-new-members>.

Business Nomination _____

Reason(s) _____

(Continue to Page 2 for more Award Nomination Categories)

P.O. Box 84 - Mt. Zion, IL 62549 – (217) 864-2526 – mtzionilchamber@gmail.com



Non-Profit of the Year

The Non-Profit of the Year Award recognizes a Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce non-profit organization that has had great impact on the community over the last 12 months.

Business Nomination _____

Reason(s) _____

The NExT Awards

Young professional individual (under 40) from Mt. Zion Chamber Businesses that display leadership, creative business practices, and/or are making significant contributions and commitment to their community.

Individual Nominated (full name) _____

Reason(s) _____

**Volunteer of the Year & President's Award of Excellence is not nominated but selected by the Chamber.*

Nominator Section (optional)

Nominated by (print): _____

Nominated by (signature): _____ Date: _____

Your Company's Name (print): _____

Your Company Email Address: _____

Instructions for Nomination Submission Section

- Optionally, you can complete online nominations at <https://www.mtzionchamber.org/award-nominations/>
- Or complete this form, print and sign your name and business represented
- Scan and Email to: mtzionilchamber@gmail.com
- Or mail to: Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 84, Mt. Zion, IL 62549
- Deadline to submit is March 13, 2026.



2026 College & Postsecondary Career Technical Scholarship Application

\$3,000 Total to be Awarded

SUBMIT TO:

Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce • PO Box 84 • Mt. Zion, IL 62549
or mtzionilchamber@gmail.com

Applications Due no later than April 6, 2026

Criteria

- Must be in the current graduating class from Mt. Zion High School or if attending another high school must be the child of dues-paying Mt. Zion Chamber member. If home-schooled, you must provide proof of eligibility.
- Must provide acceptance letter from a post-secondary institution to pursue an associate or baccalaureate degree in a business-related field **or other major** or letter of acceptance from a trade school if pursuing a technical career.
- Must enroll as a full-time college student (minimum of 12 credit hours per semester) or show proof of their full-time course load or full-time apprenticeship in a trade school.
- Must submit completed application, official high school transcripts, and other required documents to the Chamber by April 6, 2026.
- Must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 (weighted scale) by the end of 7th semester.
- Must demonstrate service to the Macon County community.
- Must submit a separate page describing the service you have performed (include extra-curricular activities, church/community service, work experience, etc.).
- Must submit a separate page essay of at least 250 words describing the benefits of affiliation with the Chamber of Commerce in promoting business and business professionals.

Student Last Name _____ First _____ M.I. _____

Data Street Address _____

City State Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Post-Secondary College/Technical School _____

Data Anticipated Enrollment Date _____

Declared Major _____

*Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors reserves the right to choose recipient(s) at its discretion,
and at times may choose to withhold the awarding of scholarships.
For more information: Call 217-864-2526 or email mtzionilchamber@gmail.com.*



Non-Profit Appreciation Banquet

January 27, 2026





Non-Profit Appreciation Banquet cont'd

January 27, 2026

