

SEPTEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER



President's Message

Laura Cullison

Hello everyone!

Can you believe summer is already winding down? Where did it go? Fall is right around the corner, although I'm sure Mother Nature isn't quite finished with those warm days just yet.

Speaking of summer, our **3rd Annual Golf Outing was a HUGE success!** We couldn't have asked for better weather, and we had such a fun day on the course. A BIG thank you to all of our sponsors, volunteers, and golfers who came out and supported the Chamber. Your support means so much!

And now for some exciting Chamber news! We are thrilled to announce that **Kyle Karsten is returning to the Chamber Board as our Vice President!** Kyle has been a tremendous leader and supporter of the Mt. Zion Chamber, and we are so excited to welcome him back. We look forward to having his experience, energy, and leadership back on the team!

Of course, we're already looking ahead. **Mark your calendars for August 23, 2027, for our 4th**

continued on [page 3](#)

Networking Tips

Talking More Than You Listen

It's natural to want to explain what you do. After all, that's why you're there, right?

Not exactly.

While a conversation about what you do is easy for both sides, people remember how you made them feel far longer than they remember your list of services. If you dominate the conversation, you've missed the opportunity to learn what matters to the other person. You've failed to recognize what could have become an open door to future connections and business.

continued on [page 5](#)

UPCOMING

SEPTEMBER 9

Picnic Luncheon
12:00-1:00

Exhibitor

Mossy Oak Properties

Location

Mt. Zion Fletcher
Park Pavilion

Caterer

Crawford's Pizza

Member cost \$15
RSVP by noon Tues., 9/8/26

SEPTEMBER 4

**Mt. Zion Teacher & Staff
Appreciation Sponsorships
Due**

SEPTEMBER 23

**Prayer Breakfast
Sponsorships Due**

OCTOBER 14
LUNCHEON

"Marketing Panel"
Antioch Christian Church



2026-2027 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Laura Cullison
President
Evergreen Senior Living



Kyle Karsten
Vice President
Dove, Inc.



Trisha Beck
Treasurer
Beck Realtors, Inc.



Crystal Hernandez
Secretary
HDZ Roofing Co.



Brian Beube
Heartland Bank and Trust



Shane Bracken
J.J. Swartz Co.



Angie Manms
Decatur Earthmover Credit
Union



Koyla Marsh
Hickory Point Bank & Trust



Koralee Misner
The Solvr Group



Linda Harper
Executive Director
Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce



Ashley Batchelder
Outgoing Officer Advisor
Mt. Zion District Library



September 2026 Luncheon



The September 9, 2026 luncheon will be at the Mt. Zion Fletcher Park Pavilion. The cost of our luncheon is \$15. Registration is from 11:30 - 12 noon. The picnic lunch opens at 11:45. The luncheon starts at 12 noon. It will be catered by Crawford's Pizza.

Let's have some fun and enjoy a more relaxed picnic-style luncheon. We will network and get to know each other better by telling about ourselves and one fun thing about yourself, your business's products and services, what new skills you have learned and/or new things that are happening at your businesses, ask questions, and share ideas for MZCC.

Please send your RSVP to mtzionchamber@gmail.com by Tuesday, September 8th 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 so they can be included on 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](#)

Annual Golf Outing. We hope to see all of our familiar faces again, along with some new golfers. More golf, more laughs, and hopefully just as good of weather!

We have a LOT happening with your Chamber this fall, starting with our **September luncheon**. This month is all about networking and conversation, so there won't be a guest speaker. Instead, we'll have time to catch up, meet other members, and maybe discover that the person sitting next to you is someone you should have been doing business with all along! We'll be outside at the **Fletcher Park Pavilion**, so come enjoy some lunch and good conversation with us.

Then we have one of our special community events, the **Annual Mt. Zion Community Prayer Breakfast on October 21st**, featuring **Dr. Kelly Clark** as our speaker. This is always a meaningful morning and a wonderful opportunity for our community to come together.

And before we know it, we'll be celebrating **Veterans Day on November 11th** with our **Veterans Day Breakfast**, featuring **James Keith** as our speaker. We look forward to coming together to honor the veterans in our community and saying a heartfelt thank you for their service and sacrifice.

There is always something happening in Mt. Zion, and that's one of the things I love about this community! Thank you for continuing to support the Chamber, our local businesses, and each other. When our businesses and community work together, good things happen — and there's usually a little fun along the way!

Warmly,
Laura Cullison



Announcements



2026 Mt. Zion Teacher & Staff Appreciation

Information about this year's sponsorships for the gift bags we distribute to the Mt. Zion School District teachers and staff is on [page 8](#). Sponsorships due September 4, 2026.



2026 Mt. Zion Community Prayer Breakfast

Information about this year's annual Mt. Zion Community Prayer Breakfast on October 21, 2026 at the Mt. Zion Convention Center is on [page 9](#). Sponsorships are due on September 23, 2026. Dr. Kelly Clark will be the speaker. Order or by your tickets or Table of Six by October 16, 2026.



Mt. Zion Chamber Membership Directory 6th Edition

Please order your ad for the **Mt. Zion Chamber Membership Directory 6th Edition** by October 26, 2026. Carolyn Ridenour owns Creative Media Services and has partnered with MZCC to publish our Membership Directory every other year for the past at least 12 years. The directory will be distributed to our membership and the Mt. Zion/Decatur community. The order form is on [page 11](#) or at [MZCCevents](#) for download.



2026 MZCC Membership Data Verification

The verification of your contact information continues as we have only received approvals from about half the membership for our upcoming **Mt. Zion Chamber Membership Directory 6th Edition**. Please be sure to reply to the next verification email if you have not.



New Email Address

We have a **NEW** email address for you to add to your email contact list. It is ExecDir@mtzionchamber.org. The mtzionilchamber@gmail.com email address will remain active for a few months.



Networking Tips continued from [page 1](#)

Instead of launching into a rehearsed pitch, ask questions.

- What brought you to today's event?
- What's been keeping you busy lately?

What's something exciting happening in your business?

People enjoy talking about themselves, and they'll often volunteer information that helps you identify ways to help them or connect them with someone else.

Ironically, the less you talk about yourself, the more memorable you become.

Treating Every Conversation Like A Sales Opportunity

Few things end a conversation faster than realizing you're being treated like a prospect instead of a person.

Networking isn't speed dating for sales.

While most people will tell you the goal is more sales, you can't start there. First, you want to build trust. The business owner you meet today may never become your customer. They might, however, refer five people to you over the next three years. They may become a strategic partner. They may invite you to speak to their organization.

Those opportunities only happen when relationships come first.

People buy from people they know, like, and trust. Networking helps create the "know" and like part. The trust takes time.

Staying With People You Already Know

It's comfortable to walk into an event and immediately find coworkers, longtime members, or familiar faces. It's also one of the easiest ways to limit your return on investment.

Challenge yourself to meet at least three new people at every chamber event.

If someone is standing alone, introduce yourself. If you see a group, ask if you can join the conversation. Most people appreciate someone taking the first step because they're just as nervous as you are.

This is critical at any networking event. After all, your next customer probably isn't the person you've known for the last ten years. If they wanted to hire you, they already would have.

Forgetting to Follow Up

Networking doesn't end when the event does.

In fact, that's when the real work begins.

If you had a meaningful conversation with someone, don't wait weeks to reconnect. Send a short

continued on [page 12](#)

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS, RAFFLE & GOLFER GIFT BAG DONATIONS



WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS

GOLD SPONSORS



SILVER SPONSORS



HIT THE GREEN SPONSOR



HOLE-IN-ONE SPONSOR



LUNCH SPONSOR



SIGN SPONSOR



BEVERAGE SPONSORS



Hole Sponsors

Air King, Inc.
Better Homes and Gardens -- Randy Grigg
Bevo's
Decatur Orthopedic Center, LLC
Dove, Inc.
Dunn Company
El Corral Mexican Restaurant

JDM Custom Construction LLC
Macon County Farm Bureau
Main Place Real Estate
Millikin University
Mo Fiesta Taco Bell
Passion Community Church
Scott State Bank

See Golf Outing pictures on [page 13](#) and at www.facebook.com/mtzchamber.



Member
Spotlight



PROVEN MEDICAL

EXCELLENT ATTENTIVE HEALTHCARE

The Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce loves its member businesses and wants you to learn more about them by bringing you this month's Member Spotlight – Proven Medical. What if your doctor had more time for you? At Proven Medical, Dr. Dana Ray offers personalized, accessible care through a simple monthly membership. Enjoy longer visits, easier communication, and a physician who truly knows you and your health goals. Proven Medical is located at 151 West Village Parkway in Mt. Zion. Learn more at proven.llc or call 217-675-7285 today to get started.



2026 Mt. Zion Teacher & Staff Appreciation Sponsorship

The Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce would like to show our appreciation to Mt. Zion Teachers and Staff. We want to show them that we see what they are doing and appreciate it very much.

We will be providing them with a gift bag containing: one \$10 gift certificate from a MZCC member restaurant, and a Mt. Zion Del's Popcorn treat. Again this year, we will randomly draw five Mt. Zion teacher names to win a free \$50 membership with Sunshine Supplies for Teachers, which allows their members to shop once a month for free supplies.

We are seeking the sponsorships below to help fund the Mt. Zion Teacher & Staff Appreciation. We delivered 227 gift bags last year; this includes Teachers, Teacher's Aides & Staff.



YES, I WOULD LOVE TO BE A SPONSOR FOR THE MTZ DISTRICT SCHOOL'S "WE APPRECIATE YOU MTZ SCHOOL DISTRICT"!

BUSINESS NAME: _____

Sponsorships (choose one):

- ☐ \$600 Sunshine Supplies for Teachers Sponsorship: Receive recognition as the sponsor of the Sunshine Supplies for Teachers five memberships in MZCC newsletter, on the MZCC Facebook page, and on the communication to the teachers who win the free Sunshine for Teachers membership.
- ☐ \$500 Gold Sponsorship: Receive recognition on gift bags, in MZCC newsletter, and on MZCC Facebook page.
- ☐ \$250 Silver Sponsorship: Receive recognition in MZCC newsletter and on MZCC Facebook page.
- ☐ \$100 Bronze Sponsorship: Receive recognition in MZCC newsletter.

Sponsorships are due by September 4, 2026. Please mail or email this form to mtzionchamber@gmail.com, and you will be invoiced. Or you can mail a check and make it payable to and mail it to:

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



Mt. Zion Community Prayer Breakfast

October 21, 2026

7 a.m. Mt. Zion Convention Center

Sponsorship Due Date: September 23, 2026

	Gold Sponsorship \$2,000	Silver Sponsorship \$1,000	Bronze Sponsorship \$500
Prayer Breakfast Tickets	Two Tables of 6 with name Prominently placed as Gold Sponsor	One Table of 6 with name Prominently placed as Silver Sponsor	4 Tickets
Sponsor Promotion at Prayer Breakfast	Time for your Representative to Speak during program Sponsor name announced at Breakfast	Sponsor name announced at Breakfast	Sponsor name announced at Breakfast
Sponsor Inclusion in Prayer Breakfast Program	Sponsor name and logo on program	Sponsor name and logo on program	Sponsor name listed on program
Sponsor Inclusion in Pre-Event Advertising	Sponsor name and logo on Prayer Breakfast flyers, and ads Sponsor mention in all radio spots Sponsor logo on Prayer Breakfast Facebook boost	Sponsor name and logo on Prayer Breakfast flyers Sponsor logo on Prayer Breakfast Facebook boost	
	Sponsor logo in Chamber newsletter and website	Sponsor logo in Chamber newsletter and website	Sponsor name in Chamber newsletter
Sponsor Inclusion in Post-Event	Free business/organization ad in Chamber newsletter and Facebook post	Free Facebook post of business/organization ad	Free business/organization ad in Chamber newsletter

\$150 Speaker Gift Sponsor (only one): Business name announced at breakfast.

2026 MT. ZION COMMUNITY PRAYER BREAKFAST

Please be a sponsor of this year's Prayer Breakfast with Dr. Kelly Clark as our speaker. The 2026 Mt. Zion Community Prayer Breakfast on October 21, 2026 from 7-8 a.m. will be at the Mt. Zion Convention Center. Our caterer is Angelo's Catering.



Dr. Kelly Clark grew up in Texas. Since Jr. High, he knew he wanted to become a dentist. He served in the Marine Corps and the Army. After graduating with his dental degree, he moved to Decatur in 2003 to start his private practice as an associate under Randy Van Alstine. As Dr. Clark's dental practice grew, they became Decatur Dental Care. Christ is the central part of Kelly's life, and he tries to reflect that relationship to the community. Dr. Kelly Clark will share his missionary work that he has been active in many different community events and construction of 14 new homes for families in need. Songs will be sung by Zach Garrett.

To be a sponsor, please email me at ExecDir@mtzionchamber.org to let me know which sponsorship level you would like by September 23, 2026; they are on [page 9](#). There are three levels of sponsorships available for this year's Prayer Breakfast. HSHS St. Mary's Hospital is our Gold Sponsor. Each level of sponsorship contains a various number of tickets included in the sponsorship package as well as a different amount and kind of advertising, promotions, and mentions. You will be invoiced. You can download the Sponsorship Form at [2026 Prayer Breakfast Sponsorships](#) (scroll down); then email me which sponsorship level you wish to have.

Advance tickets only. Individual tickets are \$15 each. The cost of a Table for 6 is \$75. Tickets or a Table of 6 can be ordered by emailing mtzionilchamber@gmail.com or by using the form at [2026 Prayer Breakfast Order Form](#); you will be invoiced. To pay for your tickets, go to [Purchase 2026 Mt. Zion Community Prayer Breakfast Tickets or Tables](#) (click on Register for this event). Your ticket order will be mailed to you; if ordered close to the event, your tickets will be in Will Call. Please purchase or order your tickets by October 16, 2026.

This is the 14th year Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce and HSHS St. Mary's Hospital, our Gold Sponsor, have scheduled this important community event. Please plan on coming to hear Dr. Kelly Clark's story.

Mt. Zion Chamber Directory

6th Edition

It is time to update our full-color membership directory! All members have an opportunity to promote themselves as active members in our communities. All members in good standing will be included in the membership and category listings at no charge. There is also the opportunity to advertise and those who do will be recognized in the directory. Creative Media Services, Inc. (CMS) will partner with the Chamber and coordinate the advertising and design services.

Distribution — All Members, Chamber Events, and Public Locations **Directory Specs** — 5.5" x 8.5" • Full Color

For the Advertiser —

To include your advertisement in the Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce Directory - 6th Edition, please **fill out the form below and email the ad to: CMS - cridenour@cmsdecatur.com** Attention: Carolyn Ridenour. The advertising deadline is: Monday, October 26, 2026. Invoices will be sent by the Chamber and are payable upon receipt.

Advertising Sizes/Dimensions/Rates —

- 1/4 Page • 2.375" x 3.875" • \$295
- 1/2 Page • 5" x 3.875" • \$395
- Full Page • 5" x 8" • \$495
- Full Page (Inside Front or Back Cover) • 5.5" x 8.5" w/.125" bleeds (no crop marks) • \$550
- Full Page (Back Cover) • 5.5" x 8.5" w/.125" bleeds (no crop marks) • \$650

When supplying a print-ready ad, keep in mind that it should be sized to fit the exact dimensions of the ad size you have purchased. Accepted file types include ai, eps, pdf, jpg, and tif. If it is a raster-based file, please make sure that its resolution is at least 300 ppi at its full dimensions.

If needed, Creative Media Services can design your advertisement at the following rates::

- 1/4 Page • \$50
- 1/2 Page • \$80
- Full Page (all full-page options) • \$130

If submitted ads do not meet design criteria, Creative Media Services will contact you about required services.

TO PLACE YOUR AD CONTACT:
Carolyn Ridenour — (217) 521-3265
Creative Media Services, Inc.
cridenour@cmsdecatur.com
or
Linda Harper — (217) 521-2884
mtzionilchamber@gmail.com

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
MT. ZION CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 84 • Mt. Zion, IL 62549

(217) 864-2526
mtzionchamber.org

☐ I'd like to place an ad in the Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce Directory - 6th Edition

I understand that if the ad requires services from CMS, the design work will be added to the total amount due and payable to Mt. Zion Chamber of Commerce.

Select Ad Size: ☐ 1/4 Page ☐ 1/2 Page ☐ Full Page ☐ Inside Front/Back Cover ☐ Back Cover ☐ Require CMS Design Services

Company Name	Contact Name	Signature	Date
Contact Email	Address	Contact Phone Number	

Networking Tips continued from [page 5](#)

email. Connect on LinkedIn. Mention something specific you discussed.

“Enjoyed meeting you at the chamber breakfast. I appreciated hearing about your expansion plans. I’d love to continue the conversation over coffee sometime.”

Simple. Personal. Easy.

Many business owners attend networking events regularly. The people who follow up are the ones who stand out.

Focusing on What You Can Get Instead of What You Can Give

The best networkers have a different mindset.

Instead of asking, “Who can help me?”

They ask, “Who can I help?”

Introduce two people who would benefit from meeting each other. Recommend someone for a project that’s outside your expertise. Share someone’s social media post or attend their ribbon cutting.

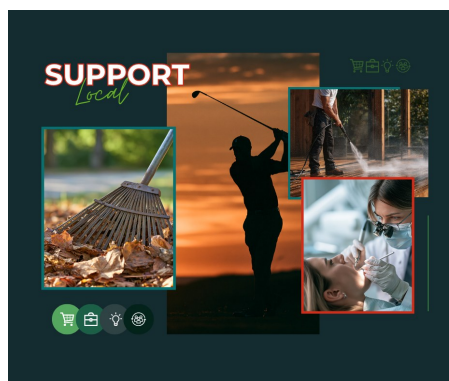
Generosity has a way of coming back around. Business communities thrive when members become connectors instead of collectors.

The Best Networking Tip Isn’t Really About Networking

Every chamber has members who seem to know everyone. They walk into a room and conversations naturally begin. That’s probably because people can tell they’re genuinely interested in others.

Approach networking with curiosity instead of an agenda. Ask thoughtful questions. Listen carefully. Look for ways to help before looking for ways to sell.

You’ll build stronger relationships, earn more referrals, and discover that networking becomes much less about working the room and much more about becoming part of the community.





2026 Golf Outing

