



2025

ANNUAL

REPORT

creating entrepreneurial opportunities

richlandcountyceo.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS

Hear from our leadership team as they reflect on this year's achievements, challenges, and the future of our program.



03

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

A snapshot of our program's mission, impact, and financial insights that made this year a success.

06

SUPPORTERS & COMMUNITY

Celebrating the investors, mentors, and board members whose generosity and guidance empower our students.



09

STUDENT IMPACT

Showcasing the inspiring journeys of our students and alumni, along with the entrepreneurial ventures they've built.

11

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

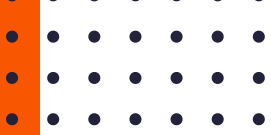
A look at the hands-on experiences, business visits, and guest speakers that brought real-world insights into our year.

13

GET INVOLVED

Discover ways to support, mentor, and connect with our program to help shape the next generation of young entrepreneurs.





LETTER FROM THE **BOARD CHAIR**



LAUREN MCCLAIN

Board Chair

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Community Members,
As President of the Richland County CEO Board, it is my honor to reflect on another transformative year for our CEO program. What originally began as a vision to foster entrepreneurial thinking in our youth has continued to flourish into a cornerstone of innovation, leadership, and real-world learning in our community. This year, our students have once again demonstrated resilience, creativity, and ambition. From launching

individual business ventures to engaging with local leaders and business owners, each participant in the CEO class has grown in both confidence and capability. They not only gained business acumen, but they also discovered their voices and have shaped the future of our local economy.

Thanks to the unwavering support of our investors, mentors, guest speakers, and community partners, our students are experiencing what few high schoolers ever do: the opportunity to connect classroom learning to the real world in meaningful, lasting ways. Every year, I tell our group of entrepreneurs how fortunate they are to have this experience. It is something many of our board members wish was around when we were their age. We are especially proud of our 2025 class who thought outside of the box with their class business. It truly is a reflection of the power of collaboration and the potential within each of our students.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to growing the program, expanding our reach, and continuing to provide students with the tools, relationships, and experiences they need to thrive—not just in business, but in life.

Thank you for believing in the mission of CEO and for investing in the future leaders of Richland County. Together, we are shaping something truly extraordinary.

With gratitude,
Lauren McClain

President, Richland County CEO Board



100% of students said that through Richland County CEO, they gained a new perspective of the contributions businesses make to our community. They also all said they shared information from business visits with others.



LETTER FROM THE **FACILITATOR**



SHERI GRAY
Facilitator

The 2024–2025 Richland County CEO journey was one of growth, discovery, and incredible transformation—for all of us. It was my true honor to walk alongside eight outstanding young entrepreneurs who inspired me every single day with their courage, creativity, and commitment. To the eight incredible entrepreneurs in the Class of 2025—thank you for showing up with curiosity, courage, and dedication. You embraced every challenge and turned each opportunity into growth. Watching your businesses

and confidence flourish was one of the greatest joys of my year. I was so proud of each of you.

To our CEO Board of Directors—your support and leadership were the foundation of this program. Thank you for your time, your wisdom, and for always championing our students and their potential. To our investors and mentors—you were the heartbeat of CEO. Your belief in these young people, your generosity, and your guidance made an incredible impact that will continue far beyond this year. And to our community—thank you for being our classroom, our audience, and our biggest supporters. Whether you hosted a visit, gave advice, or showed up at our events, you helped make this year unforgettable.

This program worked because of the people behind it. I was grateful to be part of something so meaningful and proud of what we built together.

With sincere gratitude,
Sheri Gray
Richland County CEO Facilitator



87.5% of students stated they could see themselves returning to Richland County to start a family and/or becoming part of the local economy as a business owner, employee, or resident.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The CEO program allows the students to learn the various industries, careers, and opportunities that exist in our community. They build life-long relationships with professionals that foster future growth and improvement in Richland County.



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Richland County High School



VISION

CEO nurtures entrepreneurial thinkers who possess an awareness of themselves and their communities.



MISSION

Being and developing life-long learners, owners, creators, communicators and connectors



CULTURE

Expecting the best of ourselves and others that reflects the spirit and accountability found in CEO.



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

1



CURRENT STUDENTS

8



TOTAL ALUMNI

50



ACTIVE INVESTORS

45



BOARD MEMBERS

12



YEARS ACTIVE

8



FINANCIAL

HIGHLIGHTS

● Investors

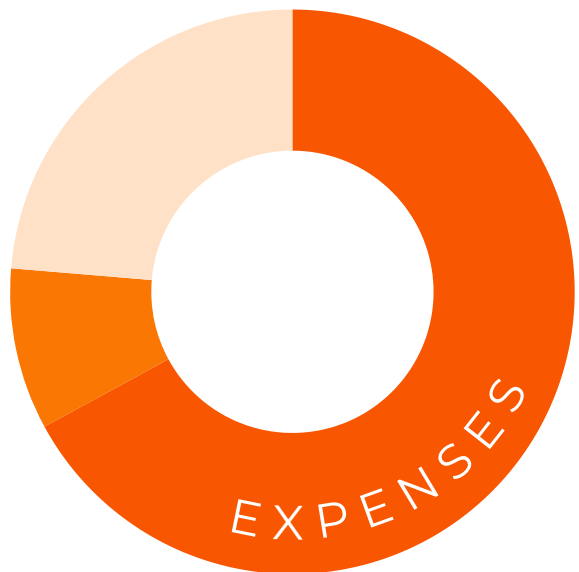
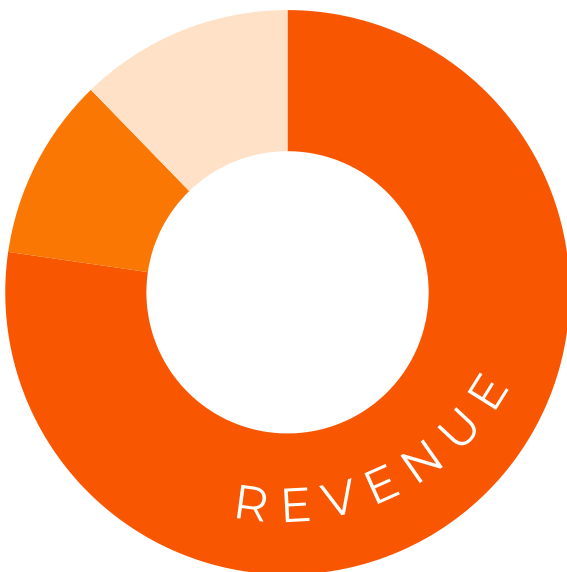
● Friends of CEO

● Class Business

● Salary

● MIE Chapter Fee

● Operating Expenses



INCOME STATEMENT REPORT

CLASS OF 2025 | **AUGUST 1, 2025 - JULY 31, 2026**

| ITEM | AMOUNT |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| REVENUE | |
| Investors | \$45,800.00 |
| Friends of CEO | \$1,500.00 |
| Grants | \$2,500.00 |
| Other | |
| TOTAL REVENUE | \$49,800.00 |
| EXPENSES | |
| Contract Services | 39,650.04 |
| MIE Chapter Fee | \$5,000.00 |
| Marketing | \$1,704.93 |
| Operations | \$12,787.31 |
| Insurance | \$400.00 |
| Miscellaneous | \$190.93 |
| Other | \$156.18 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$59,889.39 |
| NET INCOME | -\$10,089.39 |

INVESTORS

POWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

Our Program Investors provide support to our community-driven program. An annual investment of \$1,000 provides the necessary resources for current-year facilitator salary and operating expenses and ensures the sustainability of the Richland County CEO class for future students. Investors also contribute their time to the program, hosting business visits, providing guest speakers and serving as mentors. All are crucial to the success of Richland County CEO.



| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| A.M. Transport Services | First National Bank in Olney | Runyon Insurance Agency, Inc. |
| Avery & Mary Jo McKinney | Gene & Sherry Brauer | Runyon Oil Tools, Inc. |
| Baker Hughes | Hometown Appliance | Shuler Truck & Tractor Service, Inc. |
| Bartley C. Zuber, Attorney at Law | Illini Builders Company of Olney | Southern IL Scale |
| Big R Farm Store | Illini Wire Works, Inc. | Thrifty Home Medical |
| Blake and Melissa Runyon, White Oak Events | Illinois Gas Company | TrustBank |
| Blank's Insurance Agency | Infiniti Strength & Performance | US Weight |
| Carle Richland Memorial Hospital | Joe's Pizza | Wabash Valley Service Company |
| Carrie Winter Trust (Grant) | Kemper CPA Group | WalMart DC 6059 (Grant) |
| CEO Class of 2023 | MAC Plastics Manufacturing | WalMart Supercenter #254 (Grant) |
| CEO Class of 2024 | Mark & Kelsey Phillips / Microsoft | Wabash General Hospital |
| Charleston Engineering | Master Halco | Ward Family Trust |
| Citizens National Bank of Albion | Mike and Janet David | |
| City of Olney | Olney Rotary Club | |
| Country Financial Insurance | Pacific Cycle | |
| Doll's Inc. | Prairie Farms | |

MENTORS

GUIDING THE NEXT GENERATION

A mentor is a business owner, entrepreneur, or intrapreneur from the Richland County business community who plays a vital role in shaping the next generation of leaders. By sharing their time, expertise, and real-world experiences, mentors provide invaluable guidance, encouragement, and insights that help CEO students develop confidence, critical thinking skills, and an entrepreneurial mindset.



AUTUMN CARMODY

A.M. TRANSPORT SERVICES
CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

GUNNAR MICHELS

MAC PLASTICS MANUFACTURING
VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE

CONNOR DIXON

THE HERSHEY COMPANY
PACKAGING PROCUREMENT

SARA PEAVLER

OLNEY TOWNSHIP
ASSESSOR

CHELSEA KERMICLE

CARLE RICHLAND MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
MANAGER OF DEVELOPMENT AT CARLE
HEALTH

COLBY SHAWVER

USDI / IL GAS
MATERIALS AND LOGISTICS MANAGER

TARA LEMKE

CARLE
MANAGER, ORGANIZATIONAL AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

KELSIE STERCHI

CITY OF OLNEY
CITY CLERK



MENTOR TESTIMONIAL

"I strongly believe in the skills CEO helps develop for our entrepreneurs, and love being a small part of how this program sets up these students to be future leaders in our community."
-Connor Dixon

BOARD MEMBERS

STEERING THE FUTURE OF
ENTREPRENEURSHIP



LAUREN MCCLAIN
Board Chair
Runyon Insurance



GINA KOCHER
Vice Chair
TrustBank



MADDY JONES
Treasurer
Big R Farm and Home



BRANDAN MICHELS
Secretary
MAC Plastics



TARYN BUNTING
Board Member
IECC



JASON FOX
Board Member
RCCU #1



DON HINCKLEY
Board Member
WMDC #6059



DARRELL HOUCHIN
Board Member
RCCU #1



HEATH HOUCHIN
Board Member
First National Bank in
Olney



JACLYN SHAN
Board Member
Kemper CPA



**SHERRY
SLANKARD**
Board Member
RCCU #1



**TIFFANY
TRUPIANO**
Board Member
Joe's Pizza

CLASS OF 2025

THE ENTREPRENEURS OF TOMORROW

Brayden Beard



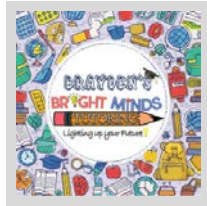
Brayden Beard, son of Brad and Brenda Beard, was active in football, track, and tennis, and held leadership roles in FBLA, FCA, and student council. He earned high honors all four years, was an Illinois State Scholar, DAR recipient, Phi Theta Kappa member, and Top Teen at RCHS. He planned to study Business Analytics at the University of Evansville. Through CEO, Brayden launched "Brayden's Bright Minds Tutoring," gained confidence, and strengthened his public speaking and networking skills, leaving with a deeper appreciation for the local business community and a clear drive to pursue his goals.

Jillian Bettis



Jillian Bettis, daughter of Julie and Todd Bettis, earned high honors all four years and was active in sports, playing volleyball throughout high school and serving as varsity captain her senior year. She also ran track and played softball and tennis as a freshman. An Athletic Ambassador, she was recognized for her leadership. After graduation, she planned to attend Olney Central College to study nursing. CEO was a highlight of her senior year, where she launched Sweet Eats & Canine Treats and gained confidence, creativity, and professional skills that prepared her for a bright future.

BRAYDEN'S
BRIGHT MINDS
TUTORING



SWEET EATS &
CANINE TREATS



Payden Buchanan



Payden Buchanan, son of Jordan and Ashley Buchanan, was active in his community, volunteering at the Food Pantry and local church events. A varsity soccer player, he consistently pursued leadership roles to grow and make a positive impact. Joining CEO his senior year, he saw it as a chance to build soft skills and connect with business leaders. He especially valued touring local businesses and learning from professionals. Payden launched Custom Key Creations, designing unique mechanical keyboards. CEO played a key role in shaping his personal growth and entrepreneurial journey.

Ainsley Doris



Ainsley Doris, daughter of Jason and Shawna Doris, earned high honors and was named a 2025 Illinois State Scholar and National Rural & Small Town Recognition recipient. She planned to attend the University of Evansville to study Economics and Legal Studies, with goals of law school. CEO was a transformative experience, building her skills in leadership, communication, and time management. Her business, Flicker & Flame Candle Creations, featured handcrafted candles and wax melts in unique scents, including a custom Olney Tiger candle. CEO helped spark her passion for creativity and entrepreneurship, shaping her future path.

CUSTOM KEY
CREATIONS



FLICKER & FLAME
CANDLE
CREATIONS



CLASS OF 2025

THE ENTREPRENEURS OF TOMORROW

Mariah Livingston



Mariah Livingston, daughter of Brian and Lacie Livingston, found her passion for creativity and entrepreneurship through the CEO program. She launched The Tastebud, a seasoning business, gaining real-world experience and earning first place at Pitch Day. CEO taught her the value of hard work, communication, and resilience. A high honors student and cheerleading captain, Mariah planned to attend Greenville University to study secondary education, aiming to inspire future students. With drive, positivity, and a heart for others, she looked forward to continued growth and making a lasting impact.

THE TASTEBUD



Brendan McCartney



Brendan McCartney, son of Kelly and Rob Powers, played football his first two years before taking junior year off to recover from injury and spending senior year working. He joined the CEO program uncertain of its value but found it helped him grow in confidence and direction. Unsure of his future, a call from a Navy recruiter sparked his interest in the military. After a medical delay, he reapplied and now awaits clearance. In the meantime, Brendan continues building life skills, also exploring structured careers like law enforcement while crediting CEO for shaping his mindset and discipline.

HEROES
PROTEIN



Audry Runyon



Audry Runyon, daughter of Jennifer and Jonathan Runyon, was a consistent honor student and active in student council, athletic ambassadors, Co-Op, and prom committee. A two-time Stripes Award winner and IPA nominee, she played multiple sports and captained the soccer team her junior and senior years. After graduation, she planned to attend Wabash Valley Central College to study surgical technology and play soccer. Through the CEO program, she grew in confidence and professionalism, launching "Authentic Radiance," her all-natural skincare line, and gaining skills in public speaking, marketing, and time management.

AUTHENTIC
RADIANCE



Raeleigh Rusk



Raeleigh Rusk, daughter of Emily and Kyle Rusk, earned High Honors all four years and was a STRIPES Award recipient for integrity. She played softball and basketball and received the Student Ambassador Scholarship to Olney Central College, where she planned to study finance before transferring to the University of Illinois. The CEO program had a lasting impact on her, teaching responsibility, communication, and business operations. Her business, Rusk's Marketing Business, supported small businesses with social media. CEO strengthened her work ethic and appreciation for entrepreneurship, and she expressed gratitude for the support that shaped her future.

RUSK'S
MARKETING
BUSINESS





CLASS BUSINESS

“BAKE IT UNTIL YOU MAKE IT”



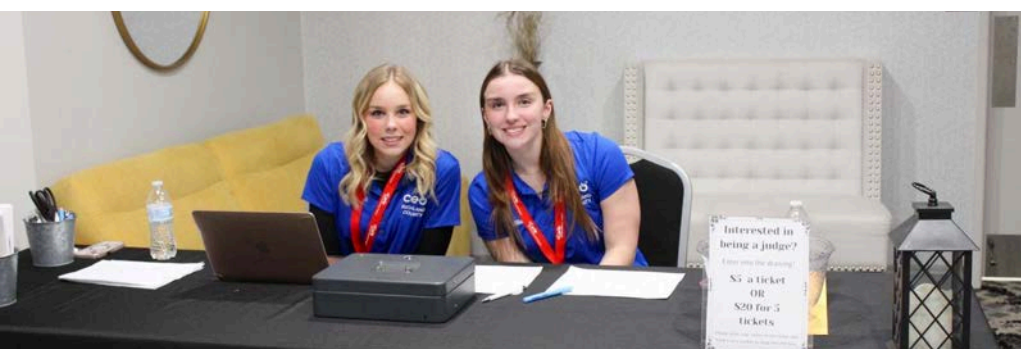
IMPACT TO STUDENTS

The class business is the most valuable part of the experience to me because it taught us how to work together as a team. We connected to the community and created memories, all while learning productive lessons. Working that closely with a team is something that I have never experienced before, and I am so glad that I had the opportunity to do it with my CEO family.



FINANCIALS

During the class business, “Bake it Until You Make It”, students worked diligently to assemble teams and create an exciting event for the community. Through their ticket sales, raffle, and auction income, they grossed \$12,018.42 with a net profit of \$5,872.61.



BUSINESS VISITS & SPEAKERS

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: LEARNING FROM REAL BUSINESS LEADERS

A key part of the CEO experience is visiting local businesses in Richland County. Every day, people pass these businesses without realizing their impact on the local economy. Through these visits, students gain a new perspective—walking away with a deeper appreciation and never seeing these businesses the same way again.

A.M. Transport
Best Western Plus & Parkside Inn & Suites
Big R Farm & Home
Blank's Insurance
Carle RMH
Charleston Engineering
Citizens National Bank of Albion
City Hall
Consolidated Grain & Barge
Doll's Inc.
Eagleson's Automotive
Edward Jones
First National Bank of Olney
Hometown Appliance
Hurn's Lumber
IECC District Office
IL. Gas Company / USDI
Illini Wire Works, Inc.
IOGA Conference
Joe's Pizza
Kemper CPA Group
Kings Furniture
MAC Plastics
Master Halco
Molding Services of Illinois
Office of RCHS Athletic Trainer
Olney Eye Care
Olney Township
Ophelia's Cup
Pacific Cycle
Parkside Event Center

Pools & Hidden Treasures
Prairie Farms
PrintForce
Racklin Realty
Racklin's Market Street Offices
Rehabilitation & Performance Institute
Richland County Middle School
Rude Wealth
Runyon Insurance
Runyon Oil Tools
Sara Buckels, LMT - Spa
SKS USA
Southern Illinois Scale
St. Joe School
State Farm
TrustBank
US Weight
WalMart DC 6059
Zuber Law



BUSINESS TESTIMONIAL

Having the CEO entrepreneurs visit my office is a morning I look forward to every year. I am always surprised to hear a thoughtful question that I have never been asked. These young people do not merely want to hear "your story;" they intend to learn from it.

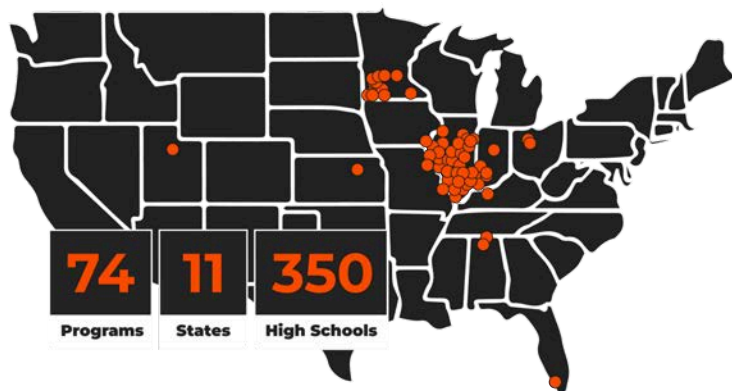
-Bartley Zuber



WE NEED COMMUNITY-MINDED INDIVIDUALS LIKE YOU.

CEO is free for students and schools. The program relies on local investors to support this transformative learning experience.

INVEST IN TOMORROW, TODAY.



By helping us connect our young people with local businesses and area leaders, you are making a direct impact on the workforce and leaders of tomorrow.

AS AN INVESTOR, YOU RECEIVE:

- Name/Logo Recognition on CEO Website
- Social Media Acknowledgement
- First Rights to host/visit the class



"The CEO experience has been life changing for me. I learned a lot of skills I wouldn't have been able to gather otherwise and I feel more prepared for my future. CEO opened up more doors for me than any other opportunity ever has."



"CEO is so much more than how to run a business. It is teaching students the life skills and all of the things that go into being successful in any career path you choose. It exposes all of our students to what endless opportunities are right here in our backyard."



"In 20+ years in economic development, the chamber of commerce and the economic development corporation, CEO has been the most beneficial most gratifying program I have been involved with."

Contact us



www.richlandcountyceo.com/Investors



Lauren McClain, President
lmcclain@runyoninsurance.com