

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Galesburg Mayor only one of many area Knox grads

An editor of our daily newspaper wrote last week about the young folks who do not stay in Galesburg or Knox County, and he's right — there is a problem. But he went on to say that Knox College graduates, for example, are not in evidence as leaders of the community. He mentioned only Knox graduate and mayor of Galesburg, Bob Sheehan. Bob is one of many Knox graduates who were not originally from Galesburg, but chose to continue living in this area, much to the benefit of the community.

In fact, four of the last five Galesburg mayors have been Knox College graduates, including Robert Cabeen, Robert Kimble and his son, Fred Kimble.

According to the 2001 Knox Alumni directory, there are about 625 Knox graduates who live in the City of Galesburg. This does not include those in the area who have settled in Abingdon, Victoria, Altona, East Galesburg, Gilson, Oneida, Wataga, Knoxville, Dahinda, Rio and even Ellisville — the home of Knox College President Roger Taylor, class of 1963. In fact, there are about 1,000 graduates in the Galesburg region. There are 200 educators, 83 business owners and executives, 15 doctors and dentists, 10 attorneys and 11 farmers who have graduated from Knox College and decided to stay around here.

There are many graduates in Galesburg who have, and currently play, vital roles in addition to their professional responsibilities. At the risk of offending someone because of my oversight, I would like to mention a few key players. Attorney Dan Alcorn, class of 1988, has been in the hot seat chairing the Galesburg Telecommunications Commission, leading public hearings and working towards a viable contract and for referendums to establish a communications infrastructure for Galesburg.

Jay Matson, '65, has probably had more impact on the Galesburg downtown retail picture than any single individual, having acquired and developed the Seminary Street Station and historic commercial district. His sacrifices and risks over a 30 year period to make his dream come true were monumental, but obviously successful.

Terry Bradford, class of '75, is Galesburg city purchasing manager. Terry Bruner, '74, is director of the local Illinois Department of Human Services. Norm Winick, '74, is a business owner, editor of the *Zephyr* and president of the Carl Sandburg Birthplace Association. He was chairman of the Knox County Democrats for 16 years. His wife, Christine Eik Winick, '73, is the elected Township Supervisor of the Town of the City of Galesburg and chair of the Knox County Board Finance Committee.

John Pritchard, '78, owns four local radio stations and was chairman of the Galesburg Area Economic Development Council during its formative years. Marc Wong, class of 1997, is a legislative aide, administrator of the Knox County Republican party, and a candidate for Knox County Clerk. Ray Franson, class of 1949, is not long retired as Regional Superintendent of Schools and member of the Knox County Board.

Jack Larson, '44, long-time businessman and radio personality, served on the Knox County Board and is Chairman of the



Galesburg Election Commission. Mike Gehring, '65, is on the Knox County Board of Review and former Galesburg Township Supervisor. Judge William K. Richardson, class of '34, was on the Galesburg Library board for 50 years and performed marriage ceremonies and was active until his recent death.

Jack Doyle, '40, served on the Knox County board and was instrumental in the establishment of the Mary Davis Youth Home. He was chief administrator of the Galesburg Clinic. Steve Eisemann, '77, is assistant principal at Galesburg High School. Karen Hawkinson, class of 1974, is a founding member and leader of the Galesburg Public Schools Foundation.

Frank Gustine, '60, was Republican County Chairman and spearheaded fund-raising and support for the initial Knox County Nursing Home referendum. Martin Reichel, '71, is president of SunRise Rotary, an early member of the Carl Sandburg Birthplace Association and regular columnist for the *Register-Mail*. The physician at The Galesburg Clinic's Prompt Care facility is Dr. Mark Weichert, class of 1978.

But one might ask, "Why does our local economic development program focus on manufacturing jobs, which are slowly decreasing nationwide, and/or minimum wage positions? Why not try to garner white collar jobs which would attract college graduates?" Bloomington/Normal are cities which have been successful at attracting not only huge insurance company headquarters, such as State Farm, but somehow managed to acquire the huge Mitsubishi auto maker plant. I might ask the *Register-Mail* editor, Jeff Rogers, how many Knox graduates have you hired? Not one, I imagine, the pay is so awful.

Well, you get the idea. Listed above are the graduates about whom I know. These people live in Galesburg and there's no doubt I've left out important contributors to our community life both here and in other towns of the area. But make no mistake, Knox College has, and continues to have, an enormous influence in this community through the work and volunteerism of its graduates.

Caroline Porter is a freelance writer from Galesburg who graduated from Knox College in 1958. She can be reached at cporter@galesburg.net.