

Features



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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - The weather forecast was grim and with dismissals, cancellations, and postponements throughout Southeast Missouri, the 10th Annual Business and Economic Conference was determined to continue.

The doors opened at the Black River Coliseum early Thursday to welcome area business leaders, customers, and attendees.

This event has created such a strong following that they were quite determined to beat the weather predictions and enjoy the strong lineup of business speakers slated for the conference.

Tucker Davis of First Midwest Bank stated, "It was our hope to bring a "big city conference" to our area so business owners and managers do not have to spend the time or money to go to places like St. Louis, Kansas City or Memphis to attend. We hope it's time well spent."

As the business community continues to face the pressures of a challenging economy, the conference has been designed to bring to the area quality speakers that are often only found by traveling to a specific industry conference or larger cities with much industry.

The idea of a Business and Economic Conference was spawned in 2003 as the First Midwest Bank President, Joey McLane, wanted to provide the bank

customers with solid, current information relating to business.

Joe Calloway was the introductory speaker who delivered an inspiring common sense approach to business operations. At a very interactive session, Calloway explored the positive characteristics of successful businesses such as Wal-Mart, Southwest Airlines, Federal Express, and others.

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Offering five solid recommendations to attendees that would increase business performance, Joe shared that simplicity of process, a laser beam focus on the core business, sticking to the basics, continuous improvement, and creating relationships that are Win-Win were common traits of successful businesses.

By design, the second session focused on the overall economy. Dr. Lawrence Chimerine shared with the group a common sense, real world approach to understanding both the cause and effects of our Nation's present economic position. His optimistic approach pointed toward changes that have occurred in both the U.S. and world economies due to globalization, which offered awareness and opportunities to the business leaders.

"There is more competition in today's marketplace than any other time in history," stated Dr. Chimerine. "Today's businesses must discover ways to be more productive using better cost effective methods."

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Examples related back twenty-five years ago to a time when 95% of autos sold in America were from "The Big 3" auto manufacturers. Today, sales from Ford, GM and Chrysler only amount to a little over 50% of the total sales of cars.

Chimerine went on to share that the governmental decisions in the past are creating huge deficit numbers that must be addressed. He pointed to three specific items that have created an annual deficit of approximately \$600 billion from previous tax cuts, two "unfunded" wars abroad and the 2006 Medicare costs.

He shared the looming problems of social security have only begun as 10 million of the 75 million "Baby Boomers" have actually begun to draw from

their retirements. A system that was developed from a basis of life expectancy of only 63 year of age and is now destined for problems if additional planning is not done.

Overall, Dr. Chimarine expressed an optimistic view of the future of the economy stating that “January 2013 provided the strongest economic indicators of any recent report”.

The keynote speaker was Frank Abagnale, one of the world’s most respected authorities on forgery, embezzlement and secure documents. Abagnale’s life was portrayed in the movie “Catch Me If You Can” starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks and directed by Steven Spielberg.

Between the ages of 16 and 21, Abagnale posed as an airline pilot, an attorney, a college professor and a pediatrician, while cashing \$2.5 million in fraudulent checks in every state and 25 foreign countries. Following his parents divorce at the age of 16, Abagnale recounted in sequence his life of lies, deceit and manipulation that brought him the spoils of life.

With a unique storytelling character, the message reached a very serious tone as he shared the true value of both a mother and a father to the life of a child. Abagnale shared the devastation of his parents' divorce had upon his life, noting the immoral, unethical and illegal activities of his childhood were forced upon a young man trying to survive.

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“I always knew that I would get caught,” said Abagnale. “The law sleeps but never dies.”

Part of his sentencing was to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to catch other criminals and give insight on how to forge documents. He continued to work for the FBI for more than 26 years pasted his requirement and he shared his pride with the audience. Abagnale beamed as he spoke of God’s gift to him and of his wife and three children. He encouraged the audience to “hug your momma and father”.

In essence, the expectation of a keynote speech about the do’s and do not’s of online security turned into a greater lesson on the value of family.

As attendees quickly enjoyed their wonderfully cooked and catered meal, they trudged out into the near freezing rain yesterday afternoon with a determined new focus on the basics of both their business, their life, and their family life. All three speakers fulfilled the hope that First Midwest Bank designed the event to accomplish – to simply make life at work and home better.

"The weather this year hurt our attendance a little, but I was still pleased with how many people came out. I think it says a lot about what they have seen from our past conferences." stated Davis.

A big thanks to First Midwest Bank for giving the community an opportunity to attend such a great conference in our area.

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