

NEWS RELEASE

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Warrensburg Main Street-UCM Enjoy Award-Winning Partnership

WARRENSBURG, MO (Oct. 1, 2020) – The formal presentation of the Missouri Main Street Connection, Inc. (MMSC) Premier Partner Award recognizing the reinvigorated relationship between the University of Central Missouri and Warrensburg Main Street, recently took place on the UCM campus.

Jill Purvis, executive director of Warrensburg Main Street, and Jamie DeBacker, Main Street events coordinator, presented a plaque to the university to commemorate the efforts of UCM faculty and staff who either worked directly with the local organization or led students on various projects in cooperation with Main Street during the 2019-2020 academic year.

The award was announced earlier in the summer by MMSC through a virtual ceremony that took place on Facebook Live. The online event honored communities, individuals, businesses and organizations from across the state that have completed exemplary revitalization work. Competitive nominations were submitted for projects, activities, and individuals in 15 different categories that covered aspects of design, economic vitality, organization, promotion, and other efforts in downtown revitalization. The recent presentation by Purvis and DeBacker gave Warrensburg Main Street leadership an opportunity to thank in person those individuals who helped make the award possible while also contributing a valuable service to the community.

“Warrensburg Main Street is excited about our renewed partnership with the University of Central Missouri,” Purvis said. “When I started last spring we set up a meeting with Courtney Goddard with the Alumni Foundation and that really got the ball rolling towards a wonderful collaboration and partnership between UCM and Main Street.”

According to Purvis, Goddard, who serves as vice president of University Advancement and executive director of the Alumni Foundation, reached out to Main Street about strategizing ways to strengthen the

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longtime partnership between Warrensburg Main Street and the University. While considering ways to enhance town-gown relations, Goddard and her staff worked to cultivate relationships between university members and Main Street staff, Purvis said.

“Over the past year we have worked with a variety of professors and students to incorporate real-life learning for students through various projects,” she noted. “Students and faculty are becoming more aware of our organization and the mission of Warrensburg Main Street. The possibilities are expansive on potential collaborative projects. We hope to foster more relationships with students and faculty for future projects in the coming years.”

Many different campus connections emerged during the past year that contributed to the MMSC award. Among faculty members who got involved was Dan Jensen, associate professor of management in the Harmon College of Business and Professional Studies, who oversees the Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise program. This positive relationship led to two downtown business owners being featured as guest speakers at the Big Idea Speaker Series. The series is sponsored by the Blaine Whitworth Memorial Foundation and provides education and “lessons learned” presented by experienced entrepreneurs to an audience of UCM students, faculty, administrators, and business professionals from the community.

Main Street also connected with a group of Integrated Business Experience (IBE) students, who were involved with volunteer projects at the annual Trick or Treat downtown event, in addition to updating the entryway and display windows with new paint at the Warrensburg Main Street office. The students also donated \$4,000 in profits to Main Street raised from creating and marketing EZ-Straws, a reusable straw product. Main Street used a portion of these funds to help activate an ally in downtown Warrensburg, which will benefit the downtown area for many years to come.

A group of students in the Innovation, Quality and Sustainability class collaborated with Main Street to solve office organizational challenges that led to integrating the organization’s office email network. The students proposed the use of G Suites, a suite of cloud computing, productivity and collaboration tools, software and products that allows the organization to have a centralized port for all of its documents, photos and contacts. This digital material can all be updated and shared, and the organization also has the ability to correlate its emails to its website through its implementation.

Additional connections that have contributed to the award-winning UCM-Warrensburg Main Street partnership have included an opportunity to collaborate with Keira Solon, assistant professor in the School of Business Strategy, who teaches Events Management and Advanced Events Management courses. She helped introduce Main Street to a group of her undergraduate students. After learning about Main Street’s mission and goals, they pitched different event concepts to implement in spring 2020. The winning selection consisted of a photo contest, “Snapshots of the ‘Burg, which was scheduled to take place during Main Street’s first Art Walk

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of the year. This allowed Main Street to add another event to its calendar. Due to COVID-19, the competition winners were announced online, but students, however, continued to work with Main Street on another project. They created a calendar which highlights photography from the competition as a way to raise additional funds to benefit Warrensburg Main Street.

Through collaborations with UCM faculty and staff members such as Mark Goodwin, associate professor of agriculture, Main Street hired a summer student intern for the Warrensburg Farmers Market, and benefitted from communication and educational guidance to help vendors strengthen their knowledge of vegetable production in Western Missouri. Annie McCoy, assistant professor of marketing, connected Main Street with students who created an entire advertising portfolio for the Warrensburg Farmers Market; Kristie Brinkley, assistant director of Student Volunteer Services, helped connect Main Street with many students who provided volunteer support for community service projects; and Amber Clifford, professor of anthropology and director of the McClure Archives and University Museum, worked with the organization on historic displays for the Warrensburg Main Street office. She also is assisting with other history-related projects that involve the organization.

Additionally, Purvis said Main Street has leveraged its connections with the university to include adding a UCM student to its board of directors, through participation in student and faculty volunteer fairs and new student orientation. She expects this reinvigorated partnership to continue to have a strong local impact moving forward.

“We appreciate the continued support of the University of Central Missouri not only for our organization but for the entire community,” Purvis said.

For more information, contact Purvis at 660-429-3988 or email director@warrensburgmainstreet.org.

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Cutline Information:

Courtney Goddard, front center, vice president of University Advancement and executive director of the Alumni Foundation at the University of Central Missouri, Receives a plaque presented by Warrensburg Main Street representatives, front left, Jill Purvis, executive director, and front right, Jamie DeBacker, events coordinator, honoring UCM as recipient of the Premier Partner Award by Missouri Main Street Connection, Inc. Joining them for the presentation were second row, from left, Keira Solon, assistant professor in the School of Business Strategy; Dan Jensen, associate professor of management; Mark Goodwin, associate professor of agriculture; Beth Ruth, director of Student Activities and the Student Recreation and Wellness Center (on behalf of Student Volunteer Services); and Annie McCoy, assistant professor of marketing.

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