



Lake County Partners' 2026 Big Event Draws Hundreds of Business & Civic Leaders to Celebrate Community Impact & Regional Momentum

Lincolnshire, Illinois, April 24, 2026 —Hundreds of local business and civic leaders came together in full force for Lake County Partners' 2026 "Big Event"—and the energy in the room made one thing clear: Lake County's momentum has never been stronger.

Held at the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort, this year's sold-out event welcomed a huge crowd of executives, entrepreneurs, educators, and community partners, all united around a shared vision for continued economic growth and opportunity across Lake County. From the moment doors opened, the atmosphere was electric. Attendees reconnected with colleagues, forged new partnerships, and engaged in meaningful conversations about the future of business, workforce development, and innovation in the region.

"A central theme throughout the morning was collaboration," noted **Dan Joyce, COO of Bath Concepts and Chair of Lake County Partners' Board of Governors**. "Lake County's success is driven by the alignment of public, private, and educational partners working toward common goals – a strategy that is clearly paying off, with 2025 being our best year of economic growth on record, and Lake County being named one of the top 10 counties in the U.S. for economic development."

"Our momentum showcases the strength of our county, the prioritization of workforce development, and our commitment to deliver a high quality of life for our residents," echoed **Sandy Hart, Lake County Board Chair and Big Event speaker**. "With our region's abundant resources, we are well-positioned to retain and attract businesses. Chicagoland has led the nation in corporate relocations for 13 years in a row – a testament to the power of our collective efforts to attract business, create jobs and serve as a national leader of strategic economic development."

A highlight of the event was the presentation of two prestigious awards recognizing organizations that are making a lasting difference in Lake County.

The Community Investment Award was bestowed on Flex for the company's recent expansion of its footprint in Lake County with a new facility dedicated to drug delivery devices. This expansion is creating new jobs, building on an already strong workforce across Flex's multiple sites in the county.

"We are honored to receive the 2026 Community Investment Award for our impact in the Lake County community," said **Riccardo Butta, president of the Health Solutions business at Flex**. "This award is a testament to our employees, whose passion and dedication make this impact possible. Our operations in the Chicago region manufacture medical devices and drug delivery

solutions that improve the lives of the people who rely on them, further reinforcing Flex’s focus on making a positive difference in the communities we serve.”

The Talent Advancement Award was presented to the College of Lake County for its outstanding commitment to preparing the workforce of tomorrow and building critical talent pipelines for regional employers.

“We are honored by this recognition,” said **President Dr. Lori Suddick**. “This work is about more than education—it’s about creating opportunity. By working with local businesses and stakeholders and connecting our students with in-demand skills and meaningful career pathways, we’re helping to shape the future of Lake County’s economy.”

Beyond the awards and announcements, the Big Event served as a powerful reminder of what makes Lake County unique: a collaborative spirit, a forward-thinking mindset, and a shared commitment to progress. As attendees left the event energized and inspired, one message resonated above all—Lake County isn’t just keeping pace, it’s setting the standard.

With new opportunities on the horizon and partnerships continuing to deepen, the future looks bright for local businesses and communities. Lake County Partners’ Big Event once again proved to be more than a gathering—it was a celebration of success, a catalyst for connection, and a glimpse into what’s next.

The Big Event is made possible with generous support from the College of Lake County, Gorter Family Foundation, Hunter Family Foundation, Lake County, Old National Bank, Schreiber Philanthropy, Kinder Morgan, Abbott, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, Bath Concepts, Boys & Girls Club of Lake County, CBRE, City of Hope, Clayco, Flex, Illinois Manufacturers’ Association, JP Morgan Chase, Lake County Workforce Development, Lake Forest College, Libertyville Bank & Trust, N.A., Lamar Johnson Collective, North Shore Gas, Steams Family Foundation, UCC Environmental, Van Vlissingen and Co., Wirtz Realty Corporation, World Business Chicago and Five Grain Events.

About Lake County Partners

Lake County Partners is a 501(c)(3) economic development corporation that works to maintain economic vitality in Lake County, Illinois by creating and retaining quality jobs, stimulating capital investment, and pursuing economic diversity. For more, visit: www.lakecountypartners.com

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