



Photo Credit: Brian Jarreau Photography

Meridian Banquets: A Multi-Generational Commitment to Exceptional Service

As recipient of multiple "Best of" awards presented by *The Knot* and *WeddingWire* – online sites used by couples searching for the ideal venue for their wedding receptions – it's no surprise that Meridian Banquet & Conference Center is, at its core, a family business.

The nearly 50,000 sq. ft. facility at 1701 West Algonquin Road in Rolling Meadows has been owned and operated by the Apostolou family since 2006. Jim and Vickie, and their three children (Tina, Bill, and Steve – who run the business), have hosted thousands of events, including weddings, corporate parties, meetings/expositions, and holiday brunches since then.

"Our family had been involved in the banquet business since 1992. We were able to lean on that experience and apply it to the Meridian on day one," Tina explained.

Greek Origins to the American Dream

Jim Apostolou emigrated from Greece to Canada in 1968 to seek a better life.

His first jobs in the hospitality industry included mopping floors and washing pots in a hotel restaurant kitchen.

"I didn't speak English well enough to wash dishes," he recalled with a smile. "They put me on pots instead."

By 1974, Jim and two of his brothers owned a Greek restaurant near Chicago's Portage Park neighborhood. The success of that small restaurant was parlayed into a wholesale gyros distribution business in 1976 that counted restaurants across the country as its customers.

As the 1990s dawned, the Apostolous had also expanded into real estate. In fact, the family's portfolio includes the recently renovated Squire Court Shopping Center on Plum Grove Road in Rolling Meadows.

Although still in school at the time, Tina, Bill, and Steve all pitched in to help the banquet business succeed. The experience they gained while growing

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Access Business Resources Online

Rolling Meadows' website offers an informational clearinghouse for business owners and entrepreneurs seeking resources to help them grow. Visit cityrm.org/35/business to access interactive maps featuring available properties, service request forms, license and permit applications, planning & zoning information, and much more.

Public Works Director to Retire May 31st



Public Works Director Fred Vogt will retire

May 31st after 22 years of City service. For the past two years, Vogt has also led the City's Community Development Division, following an organizational restructuring that transformed the former department into a division of Public Works.

Local Businesses Invited to Be Part of an Eventful Summer

Summers in Rolling Meadows are synonymous with “fun,” thanks to a packed calendar of community events designed for community members of all ages. And there are plenty of ways for local businesses to join the celebration!

- **Encourage employee attendance.** Your team works hard to ensure your organization’s success. That, in turn, helps make Rolling Meadows a great place to live, work, and play. Remind them of their important role in our community’s success by inviting them to attend and enjoy local events.
- **Support Community Events Foundation.** Financial support for City events is provided by the Rolling Meadows Community Events Foundation, a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization that relies on tax-deductible donations from residents, businesses, and community groups. To contribute, please visit cityrm.org/679/community-events-foundation.
- **Individual event sponsorships.** Connect with customers and build brand equity by sponsoring specific events. Sponsors are prominently featured in all of the City’s promotional and marketing efforts – a cost-effective option for expanding awareness of your company’s products and services.

Businesses may also provide general grant funding and/or donate materials for specific events. Contact Lori Ciezak,



City events, such as the Community Block Party (pictured), draw thousands of guests.

Community Event Foundation Liaison and Assistant to the City Manager (ciezakl@cityrm.org or 847-394-8500) for details.

“The success of Rolling Meadows’ events is due in large part to the support of our local business community,” Ciezak explained. “It’s also a great way for companies to connect with residents, build relationships with customers, and generate positive word-of-mouth.”

View a complete listing of upcoming events online at cityrm.org/669/community-events.

Connect with us at www.cityrm.org or through:



April 25th Showcase Draws Strong Praise from Local Businesses

With nearly 50 participating exhibitors and countless guests interested in learning more about local business offerings, Rolling Meadows’ April 25th Business & Community Showcase was, by all measures, a resounding success.

The second annual event, held at Meridian Banquets, offered extensive business-to-business networking opportunities while also providing a forum for residents to learn more about products and services offered by City-based businesses.



“The feedback provided by participating organizations was extremely favorable. The B2B networking portion of the program, in particular, drew high marks from those in attendance,” Business Advocate Martha Corner explained.

The annual Showcase represents an important part of Rolling Meadows’ continuing efforts to increase networking opportunities for area businesses, along with residents’ awareness of their services. Details on next year’s program will be available in coming months.

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up helped fuel Jim's decision to purchase Meridian Banquets in the mid-2000s. It represented "an opportunity for my kids to make this business their own," he explained.

Full-Service Venue Committed to Award-Winning Service

Meridian is a full-service banquet and meeting venue that specializes in both corporate and social gatherings. It serves more than 150,000 people per year by hosting everything from awards dinners to holiday brunches. While weddings comprise a majority of its business, the facility also hosts functions for many of Rolling Meadows' largest companies.

It offers five large event rooms with sound-proof walls, elaborate high ceilings, an elegant foyer with abundant natural lighting, and a dedicated service team committed to achieving customers' highest expectations.

"We don't take shortcuts when it comes to customer service," Tina explained. "We find and retain talented people who are committed to exceptional service and put them in position to succeed. They become part of the family."

"Most of our employees have been with us for many years – some were here before us," Jim added.

Success in any industry comes from consistently meeting and exceeding customers' expectations. The hospitality sector, in particular, can be particularly relentless in the social media era: just one sub-par review could potentially damage a business' reputation.

"Online reviews are how people find facilities for their events," Tina said. "The awards we've garnered from *The Knot*, *WeddingWire*, and other online event platforms help us showcase our commitment to those we serve. The key is providing great experiences to everyone who comes into our facility – from the bride and groom to the DJ they hire for their reception."

Supports City-Sponsored Events

Local military veterans have been beneficiaries of those "great experiences" since 2003. Meridian Banquets is the site of the City's annual Veterans Dinner, held the Friday evening before its yearly Memorial Day observance.

In addition, City planners moved this year's Business & Community Showcase to Meridian Banquets to benefit from the facility's reputation for hosting high-end conferences and meetings (see page 2 for details).

"We feel it is important to support our local community," Tina added. "The Meridian's relationship with the Veterans Dinner dates back more than 15 years. We are proud to have helped continue the tradition."



Generational service:
Tina Lattas and her father, Jim Apostolou

Local Biz News***The Steel Supply Company
Marks 115 Years of Success**

2019 finds The Steel Supply Company (steelsupply.com) commemorating 115th years of operation – and its 48th anniversary as a proud Rolling Meadows-based business.

In written correspondence to City officials, Vice President/CEO David Sheer marveled at how much Rolling Meadows has changed since The Steel Supply Company arrived in 1971.

"I remember the building construction well and, as a very young man, was here moving in equipment, inventory, and building racks and fixtures," he recalled. "Route 53 was still two lanes, as was Algonquin back then. We had to go to Palatine [to find] a restaurant. Times have sure changed!"

**Financial Advisory Firm
Celebrates 10-Year Milestone**

Financial Elements, Inc., a boutique financial planning and investment advisory firm, is celebrating its 10th anniversary. President Brenda Knox, CFP, started the company in 2009 to "provide clients with the financial GPS to help them navigate their financial lives," according to a company news release.

Financial Elements (financialementalsinc.com) operates on the guiding principal that effective financial planning extends beyond money: it also encompasses health and legacy planning. The firm helps clients "integrate dollars and cents with common sense and compassion" to achieve their specific goals.

*Submit your news for possible publication in upcoming issues to Martha Corner, cornerm@cityrm.org. Information may be edited for clarity or length.



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 Community Development Division847-506-6030

Natural Gas Tax Generates Expanded Revenues for Infrastructure Improvements

In line with a growing trend among area municipalities, City Council in 2018 approved a five cent per-therm surcharge on customers' gas bills to generate revenue specifically for annual roadway and infrastructure improvements. Previously, that funding had been collected by selling vehicle stickers to motorists with cars registered in Rolling Meadows.

Key benefits of moving to a natural gas use tax as a funding mechanism for infrastructure maintenance activities include:

- **Increased revenue** – City officials expect to generate additional revenue that will allow them to invest more effectively in local infrastructure projects.
- **More efficient operations** – Monthly fees are collected by the gas company and passed directly to the City, which improves internal operating efficiencies.
- **Improved customer service** – This approach also eliminates the costly, time-consuming processes formerly required to



implement the annual vehicle sticker program. This allows City staff members to focus more of their energies on serving business and residential customers.

The natural gas tax took effect last December. Customers' monthly Nicor Gas bills reflect the new utility fee, which is based on usage. *(Note: It is up to customers to complete their own cost estimates, based on the number of therms used each month or on an annual basis.)*

For more information on Rolling Meadows' natural gas use tax, please contact the Finance Department at 847-394-8500.

2019 Independence Day Parade to Help Businesses Connect with Community Members



Rolling Meadows' annual Independence Day Parade is a "star spangled" opportunity for businesses to connect with literally thousands of community members. Join the celebration by building amazing floats and specialty vehicles; decorating bikes, trikes, wagons, and strollers; or finding other ways to display your organization's patriotic pride!

Online application forms for this year's event (set for Thursday, July 4th) are available at cityrm.org/669/community-events. Submit completed applications by June 27th to reserve a spot.

For more information, contact Lori Ciezak, Assistant to the City Manager, at ciezakl@cityrm.org or 847-394-8500.