

River Bend Growth Association names Crown Vision Business of Month

May 22, 2010

By [FRED POLLARD](#)

The Telegraph

ALTON - Crown Vision Center has been recognized as the River Bend Growth Association Business of the Month for May.

"We want to thank the association for this opportunity (for exposure)," area manager Kitty Edelen said. "This was a surprise. We have been a member for many years, and we hope to continue forging a good working relationship together."

Since opening its first office in Alton in 1961, Crown Vision Center has expanded to 20 locations throughout the St. Louis and Metro East area, including two convenient locations in Alton.

While Dr. Christine Levi services the Alton locations, Crown's team of about 12 experienced optometrists are on hand to move from store to store as needed.

"It gives them more flexibility," Edelen said. "Some even jump between Illinois and Missouri if they are licensed in both states."

Edelen has been with Crown for 31 years and serves as manager for both Alton locations.

"Crown was my very first job, and I am still here," she said. "I have been with the Broadway location since day one. I guess you could say I grew up with Crown."

Calling the office at 406 East Broadway the "flagship location," Edelen said after current owner and CEO Charles Matthews purchased the business from the previous owner, things really began to take off.

"Mr. Matthews took Crown from the one office on Broadway to where it is today," she said.

Expanding across the river, Crown has 20 locations including offices in Florissant, Creve Coeur, Kirkwood, Chesterfield, Tesson Ferry and St. Charles as well as Fairview Heights in Illinois.

The Crown Optical Lab is in Wood River, and the Crown Laser Eye Center opened in St. Louis in 1999. The Lasik surgery correction procedure performed there provides an alternative to glasses and contact lenses by reshaping the front of the eye to change its focusing power.

"Mr. Matthews was looking for advancement and growth within the company," Edelen said. "Never in a blue moon did I ever think we would grow like this. I used to know every single employee at Crown, but not anymore. It has grown tremendously."

In Alton, that growth has included a new home for the Alton Square office. Last July, the location in front of the escalators closed and reopened in September on the west side behind the escalators in an expanded and updated office.

Edelen said she wants to make sure everyone in the area knows that the Crown office at Alton Square is back up and running and is a full-service optometrist location with board-certified optometrists, just like the other locations.

In spite of all the growth, Crown never has lost its commitment to public service and loyalty to the community. Just before speaking with The Telegraph, Edelen personally had delivered 12 sets of eyeglasses to needy schoolchildren.

"It was really something to see the smiling faces on the kids as I adjusted their glasses," she said. "Our goal is not to leave any children behind."

Crown Vision Center has teamed with the Essilor Vision Foundation, a public charity whose mission is to eliminate poor vision and its lifelong consequences, beginning with children age 14 and younger. Crown Vision provides the eye screenings, eye exams and distributes the glasses, while Essilor provides the frames and lenses.

"We are working with Essilor in promoting free eyeglasses to schoolchildren who cannot afford them," Edelen said. "We started this program last fall and hope to continue through the next school year."

For more information on the Alton Crown Vision Center locations, call (618) 462-7611 or visit the website at www.crownvisioncenter.com.