



For The Telegraph

The Freer family of Freer Auto Body, named Small Business of the Month for July by the RiverBend Growth Association, has run the Godfrey business for 25 years. Pictured from left to right, back row, is Tim Freer, his youngest of two daughters, Lily, 9, and his father Mike; front row from left, Tim's wife, Carrie, their oldest daughter Taylor, 12, and Tim's mother Margaret. The award is given by the RiverBend Growth Association (RBGA) every month to a regional small business that is dedicated to community service.

Freer Auto Body named RBGA Small Business of the Month

Staff report

ALTON — The RiverBend Growth Association recently named Freer Auto Body as the Small Business of the Month for July.

The award is given by the RiverBend Growth Association (RBGA) every month to a regional small business that is dedicated to community service.

"Community service is what made us what we are today," owner and president Tim Freer said. "We try to give back as much as we can."

Under the inspiration of David Freer, then an 18-year-old graduate of Ranken Technical College, Freer Auto Body was founded in 1991. Their first space was a 30-foot by 50-foot building.

David Freer died in 2008, but his family, including brother Tim, Tim's wife Carrie, and parents Mike and Margaret, continue to operate the business today. Their current space spans more than

17,000-square-feet.

"We didn't get where we are today by not working hard," Margaret Freer said.

In addition to serving on several community boards, the family-operated business has painted free of charge several vehicles, items and equipment including fire trucks, Salvation Army bells, rescue boats, water buggies and plaques. The company also hosts blood drives and fundraisers and raises money for scholarships.

The family is one of the top supporters of Community Christmas, which is sponsored by the Telegraph and the United Way providing generously to families in need at Christmastime. Tim Freer's daughters, Taylor, 12, and Lily, 9, also chip in volunteer time. Every year, they help organize the open-to-the-public event "Christmas in July," a jump-start to and in preparation for Community Christmas fundraising.

The pair of sisters will host Christmas in July from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Friday, July 29, at Freer Auto Body, where the girls, along with friends and family, will sell and serve a sloppy Joe lunch. This is the event's eighth year running. In its first year, it raised \$2,500. Last year, it raised \$25,000, Tim Freer said.

Freer's daughters have been recognized by United Way as "outstanding community volunteers" in the years since the founding of the event.

This is the fourth time that Freer Auto Body has won the RBGA's Small Business of the Month award. It also received the Captains of the RiverBend Award in 2004 and 2013. In 2011, the business received the Golden Leaf Award from the Godfrey Women's Club.

The company, now in its 25th year, offers auto body repair, custom fabrication, accessories, insurance claim assistance and rental cars. The company employs 20 individuals, including the family.

For more information on Freer Auto Body, visit www.freerautobody.com or call 618-466-6151. Freer Auto Body is located at 4512 Alby St. in Godfrey.

The RBGA is both the chamber of commerce and the economic development organization for the communities of the Riverbend. Each month one association business is selected as Small Business of the Month. The monthly winners receive approximately \$3,500 worth of marketing. The association can be reached at 618-467-2280.

July 12, 2016