

# Gent recognized by RBGA for years of service

## Alton funeral home wins small business award for month of December

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Members of the Gent family, including Les Bowles and Joanne Gent Bowles, seated, were presented with the RiverBend Growth Association's Small Business of the Month award Wednesday. Also pictured are RBGA president Monica Bristow, far left, and Awards Committee chairman Amy Schaake, far right.

ALTON — Longstanding family-owned businesses, once the backbone of a community, have become less and less prevalent over the years.

It's for that reason, among others, that Gent Funeral Home president Ralph Bowles said he believes his business was singled out by the RiverBend Growth Association for its Small Business of the Month award. The funeral home, located at 2409 State St. in Alton, was given the RBGA honor for the month of

December at a presentation ceremony Wednesday.

"We're very honored to receive it," Bowles said. "It was a surprise. We appreciate the RiverBend Growth Association recognizing us."

The funeral home is celebrating its 80th year in business this year, and it has been a family affair from the start. Ralph A. Gent opened the home in 1935 and sold it to his two sons-in-law, Les Bowles and Robert Scoggins, in 1970. Ralph Bowles joined the business in 1988, and Ralph's son Ben, the fourth generation, began working at the funeral home last year.

Ralph Bowles said the continued dedication to families and the community as a whole for eight decades set his business apart from the rest.

RiverBend Growth Association president Monica Bristow echoed Bowles' sentiment.

"Gent Funeral Home is an icon in this community," Bristow said. "They are so kind and caring to the families they serve as those families are going through some of the most difficult times in their lives. We thank them for the services they provide and all that they do in our area."

Gent Funeral Home is located at 2409 State St. in Alton. For more information, call the home at 618-466-5544 or visit their website at [gentfuneralhome.com](http://gentfuneralhome.com).

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