

Company leading the way in diagnostic technology

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[By FRED POLLARD](#)

ALTON - The River Bend Growth Association has done a complete scan of Imaging Center of Alton LLC and determined it worthy of the Business of the Month award for July.

"We were pleasantly surprised and flattered that we were selected," managing partner Steve McRae said. "We value our membership in the RBGA and believe it is very important in our business."

"It is very important for us to be involved and participate in the community," Chief Financial Officer Randy Pruetzel said.

Imaging Center of Alton, 3 Professional Drive, Suite A, has been a technology leader in the diagnostic imaging industry for years. Joining locations in Maryville and Swansea, the Alton office opened in 2007.

"Carrie (Pope, site manager), Randy, and Stephanie (Dykstra, operations manager) are the ones who are in the trenches here every day, dealing with the day-to-day operations," McRae said. "We are fortunate to have the people we have."

After completing a stint in the Air Force, McRae moved into diagnostic imaging sales. In 1993, he opened the first "open MRI" location in the area, Open MRI in St. Louis, in partnership with Central Radiology Group.

In the nearly 20 years since, McRae has continued to strive for the best service his patients can receive.

In 2007, he looked to Alton when adding Imaging Center's third location.

"We saw the community needed an outpatient center," said Pruetzel, who also joined the company in 2007. "We specialize in digital mammography and we saw there was no digital mammography service available here."

"We were the first ones in Madison County," McRae added. "We have been doing digital mammography with CAD (computer-aided diagnostics) since 2004, when we added our unit in Maryville. We also were the first ones in this area to offer that service. Other entities may have begun offering that service since, but we were the first."

The technologically advanced screening offers more precise results.

"The digital mammography offers a crisper digital image for radiologists to read," said Pope, who is celebrating 12 years with the company. "The images are not printed out, so the radiologist can read it directly from the computer. The images are higher quality and the most accurate."

Imaging Center also offers the high field, large bore/short bore MRI (what people commonly think of as "open MRI") for larger patients and patients with other issues.

"The advantages are we are able to assist larger patients with a high-field magnet, which provides them faster service and extremely high-quality images," McRae said. "Most studies also show these to be quieter machines."

"In the 'old days,' the information was transferred to an old-style cassette, which had to be developed and then you had to wait for the film to come out. Now, with digital, the image pops up immediately and the radiologist can make a lot of important decisions right there on the spot. It is much more convenient for the patient from that perspective."

"We are technology leaders in the area and we are very proud of that."

In addition to the latest in technology, the center also offers experienced and compassionate service, using a team of about 50 fellowship-trained radiologists, specialized in just about any area a patient requires.

"We have at our disposal radiologists that are sub-specialty trained," McRae said. "For instance, if there is a pediatric case that requires a pediatric radiologist, we will have one available. Whatever the specialty is, we have that specialist available in our group."

Cost and efficiency complete the grid of good service as defined by Imaging Center.

"Today, people are looking at cost," McRae said. "With higher deductibles and self-insurance, we have more and more people shopping for price due to higher deductibles. People are playing a larger part in their own health care, and many people still do not realize they have a choice. We suggest doing your research to see what options you have. Our cost structure is significantly lower than hospitals."

"We commit to having results in less than 24 hours," Pruetzel added. "If you come here to get your procedure done, your referring physician will (most likely) have your results the same day."

Imaging Center of Alton, owned by Open MRI of Southern Illinois LLC, is open from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, with after-hours available by appointment. Ultrasounds also are available, and walk-ins for digital X-rays do not need an appointment and are welcome.

CT scans and bone density screenings are available at the Maryville location.

On Aug. 11, the center will offer free digital mammography screenings (by appointment only) from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m.

"We are told approximately 50 percent of women who should have mammograms do not get them done," McRae said. "Many also think they have to go across the river to St. Louis to get quality health care, and that is just not true."

For information on Imaging Center of Alton, call (618) 465-4674 or visit the website at www.imaging4life.com or the Facebook page at [imagingcenterofAlton](#).

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