

Popular women's clothing store awarded Business of the Month

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By [FRED POLLARD](#)

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ALTON - Maurices in Alton Square has been recognized as the River Bend Growth Association Business of the Month for April.

"It is awesome," store manager Emily Lueken said. "It really is an honor, and I would like to say thanks."

Maurices offers a variety of women's fashions, including tops, bottoms, dresses, jackets, shoes, purses and accessories. The Alton location opened in 2004, and underwent an extensive renovation and expansion last year, nearly tripling in size.

Along with a larger showroom, Lueken said the store was able to expand its inventory to include fashions and accessories for women size 14-24.

"The size of the store itself prohibited us from expanding our clothing sizes," she said. "The Maurices chain actually started carrying the expanded clothing options two years before we did; it was just too small here. Our store numbers consistently showed that we had the clientele to handle the increased size and space."

During construction, the Maurices team worked out of a temporary location in the mall by the Hallmark store for four months before the newly remodeled store opened last November.

Lueken's analysis of the potential for business proved to be right on the mark.

"When the store opened, it took off right away," she said. "People in Alton took to Maurices really well. I think this mall lacked a clothing store with a young attitude. We are definitely for all ages, though. Maurices has tried to focus on that 20- to 30-something attitude, but we have a wide range of customers. We get everyone from junior high to women in their 70s."

Lueken has been with Maurices for 10 years. She previously worked at the Effingham location, and then managed the Litchfield location before transferring to Alton in 2004 to help get the new endeavor off the ground.

"I was recruited by my teacher, who worked at Maurices also," Lueken said. "One of the things keeping me here is the great, family-friendly atmosphere Maurices provides. They really care, and they work with their employees."

The chain, boasting more than 740 locations and focusing mainly on small town areas, also makes an effort to stay involved with community causes and charities. Lueken said the Alton location works closely with the ASPCA and the 5As, launching Rescues and Runways to support local animal shelters. Maurices also is a large contributor to the American Cancer Society.

Lueken said the store is excited about the break in the weather, and is stocked (overstocked, actually) on spring and summer selections.

"It has been a big season for dresses," she said. "We are really blowing out that part of our business. I am not sure what brought that about, but our dresses are in high demand right now."

Maurice's is open 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon until 6 p.m. on Sunday. For information, call (618) 463-3768 or visit the Web site at www.maurices.com.