

Association picks work-related health care service for monthly honor

April 25, 2011

By [FRED POLLARD](#)

The Telegraph

WOOD RIVER - Midwest Occupational Medicine Ltd. has been chosen as the RiverBend Growth Association's Business of the Month for April.

"The (RBGA) really helps us in that it helps make other businesses in the community aware of what we do," service representative Nancy Elson said. "For example, a business' employee can come to our day clinic to be seen by one of our occupational health experts and we can save them that hefty ER bill."

Elson, who along with Jim Chiappa serves as a liaison between Midwest Occupational and other area businesses, says the Growth Association also allows "terrific networking opportunities."

Midwest Occupational Medicine Ltd., founded by Dr. George Dirkers in 1992, has since grown from a small, intimate clinic in Wood River to about 30 full-time and 10 part-time employees in three convenient locations.

"The staff I have assembled is tremendous," Dirkers said. "Their motivation and organization is extraordinary, and their big hearts and respect they show to our patients is a testament to their value. My success is based on their hard work."

The Wood River office opened 19 years ago, handling work-related injuries, substance abuse screening, and employment and DOT/OSHA compliance health issues.

Dr. Keith Byler joined the team in 1996 and co-owns the business with Dirkers.

"We met when he was an ER technician," Dirkers said. "We were treating a severe refinery injury together, we started talking, and developed a working relationship from there."

A second location was opened in Belleville Memorial Hospital's Medical Office Center in 1997, and the Alton location at 915 E. Fifth St. opened three years ago.

"We expanded as the need and the opportunity arose," Dirkers said.

Today, the three locations boast six full-time providers to offer the highest standard of patient care and compassion.

In a challenging time when many businesses are downsizing, Midwest Occupational has fought through and not only kept all three locations, but has begun to thrive once again.

"When the economy downturned, we definitely felt it, but ConocoPhillips helped us to boost our business," Dirkers said. "This year, our goal is to get back into the swing of things and seeing our business continue to grow. I see signs of the economy turning around, which is a good thing for us and a good thing for the community."

Dirkers said the ability to staff medical facilities with nurses, paramedics and EMTs at various industrial locations contributes to his company's success and sets it apart from the competition.

The company also is heavily involved in the community and remains conscious of the environment and its impact on the area and beyond. Dirkers is vice president of the Board of Directors for Community Counseling Center of Madison County and has been involved with several mission trips to Central and South America. Byler is on the board of the Foundation for Community Encouragement as well as the St. Louis Poetry Society.

"We have also switched to reusable gowns (rather than disposable)," business manager Mike Crowe said. "We also try to conserve paper and other office supplies by trying to move toward a more electronic office environment."

As the company enters into its 20th year, Crowe said a commitment to convenience and the best service possible will be the focus for many years to come, just as it has been since day one.

"Our long-term goal is simply to continue to deliver services that reflect the needs of local industries," he said. "As certain businesses leave the area, we have been proficient at finding new opportunities. We are always seeking new opportunities to improve the service we provide and expand our base of operations."

In addition to the local area, Midwest Occupational Medicine Ltd. serves Jersey County as well as parts of Southern Illinois. For information, call (618) 251-5202 or (618) 463-5169.