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Expo leads to become new business for area companies

By Paul Anthony Arco

The purpose of the annual Regional Business Expo is to bring area companies together. That's exactly what happened for two local companies at this year's event, held on Sept. 22 at the former Sears Essentials Building on East Riverside Boulevard in Loves Park.

Meridian is a print management and promotional marketing services company located in Loves Park. J.L. Clark, a division of CLARCOR, is a custom manufacturer of metal and plastic

consumer packaging that has been in business for 106 years. The two businesses had never worked together.

That all changed, however, when Lindsey Oswald, an account executive for Meridian, met Mike Matus, vice president of sales and marketing for J.L. Clark. Oswald and Matus were working at their respective booths, which were in close proximity to one another.

"J.L. Clark is a company that I might not have been exposed to, if I hadn't attended the expo," Oswald said. "The

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casual approach was nice. We got to meet face-to-face, instead of a cold call. That's the point of these events, to get out there and showcase your business and show what you as a company can do for other businesses."

During their conversation, Matus shared with Oswald his need for printed material for an upcoming client meeting. Matus said J.L. Clark has most of its print material sourced through its local advertising firm, but is open to expanding its supply base.

Meridian got to work the next day on printing sell sheets and brochures. The results were right on the mark, according to Matus. "They did a fabulous job and delivered on time at a very competitive price," he said. "The key for us was Meridian presented a professional approach to our business. They didn't talk just about printing, but about ways they can help us expand our business. That made the difference."

Expo Brings Companies New Opportunities

More than 3,000 people turned out for the fourth-year event, which was free. Rockford Chamber of Commerce

officials are pleased with the feedback they've received from participating businesses.

"It's great to see companies picking up new opportunities as a result of the expo," said Chamber Board Chairman Mike Broski. "J.L. Clark represents one of Rockford's finest long time manufacturing companies. In comparison, Meridian is relatively new and as a result of the networking done – they both benefit.

"This year's event was better than ever. There was a great deal of energy and excitement the entire day. I have talked to many organizations that participated, and they all say the same thing – the event brought many new opportunities to participating companies."

Oswald and Matus plan on meeting again in the near future to discuss additional projects. "It was a perfect opportunity," Oswald said. "I could not have painted a better picture the way our relationship with J.L. Clark began."

The presenting sponsor of this year's expo was TDS, a telecommunications provider. The gold sponsor was Humana, The bronze sponsor was Veolia Environmental Services. Cricket Communications, Giovanni's, Inc., and the Morrissey Family Businesses were business after hour sponsors.