

SPRINGFIELD Business

July 2022

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Dan Deweese Painting and Wood Finishing

Q&A with Ruby Davis

2022 Forty Under 40

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Championing Springfield

I think Springfield is a great place to live. Perhaps that's because I moved here as an adult, since Springfield natives often seem to delight in bad-mouthing their hometown. I've never understood the complaint that there's nothing to do. Most weekends, I find myself having to pick and choose between overlapping events, and our sister publication, *Illinois Times*, currently has xxx items listed on the community calendar.

But the data shows that more young people are leaving than staying: from 2015-2020, Sangamon County's population of those aged 20-34 decreased by roughly 5%. Our summer intern, Annie Fulgenzi, is a senior at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville who is undecided about whether she will return to the Springfield area after graduation, so it seemed appropriate to have her look at ways to address the youth exodus (pg. 30).

The good news is that many of our talented young people do stay, and others move here looking for an affordable place to raise a family and the quality of life that comes from avoiding long commutes and overcrowded urban areas. This month's issue recognizes our annual class of Forty Under 40, and one of the consistent themes is that they express a desire to give back and help Springfield reach its full potential as a city.

One of the respondents noted, "We can learn from those with different perspectives, interests and short-term goals. When we use what we have collaboratively and efficiently, we can increase community unity and pride, and, because it is thriving, make Springfield a place that more people want to call home."

This issue of *SBJ* also highlights family and minority-owned businesses, ranging from multigenerational family businesses such as Dan Deweese Painting and Wood Finishing (pg. 34) and Humphrey's Market (pg. 36) to The Capital City Deal Lawyer, a boutique law firm that Jennifer Schoats Flack founded in 2019 to be able to help other entrepreneurs (pg. 46).

Reading about these diverse businesses and seeing the enthusiasm and community involvement of this year's Forty Under 40 class makes me optimistic that Springfield will become a place that more young people want to call home.



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A portrait of Ruby Davis, a Black woman with long, dark, curly hair, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a brown and white patterned blazer, a gold chain necklace with a circular pendant, and large gold hoop earrings. Her hands are clasped in front of her.

Q & A
with
Ruby Davis

By David Blanchette

Ruby Davis was born in Mississippi, where she worked chopping cotton before leaving home at age 15 to get married. Two years later, her mother and sister were killed in a car accident, and her father died the following year. Those experiences of loss inspired her to work with other grieving families. After obtaining her degree in mortuary science, she went on to complete a doctorate in business administration. Davis worked for funeral homes in Chicago, and later Springfield, before opening her own business in 2015. Since then, she has focused on expanding the business, with a second phase involving a community center nearly complete.

Where were you born and raised, and what was your early life like?

I was born and raised in Drew, Mississippi. I was blessed, I was raised in a two-parent home and as we got older, we of course had to chop cotton like most of the people in the South did. After that I went to school for a while. I left home early; I left when I was 15, I wanted to be married. So I didn't have a lot of child life there because most of my teenage years I was already married.

I left the South in 1984 and moved to Springfield. After I divorced, I moved to Chicago and lived for about 20 years. That's when I got my schooling done to become a funeral director and embalmer. Then I started out in Chicago working in the funeral industry.

Why did you decide to enter the funeral business?

In 1986, I was a teenager at the time, my mom and my sister were killed in a car accident. And I did not like the way they looked at the funeral. So I was just curious, what did they do behind the scenes to make them look so bad? At the funeral that is your last look, that is your memory, and it wasn't good for me.

Back then, 36 years ago, they didn't have the cosmetics and everything they have now to get that final, good look at the end, that memorable look. I didn't have that with my mother and sister. I don't even have a vivid picture in my mind of what that double service looked like.

Do you use that experience to help your clients get a good, final look at their loved ones?

Oh yes, that's important. I go to extremes to make sure that the day before the service when they come in, I put everything I have into it to make sure that preview is going to be right. Because that's what you are going to remember. You see, for me, I didn't remember anything.

How do you interact with people while they are experiencing some of the toughest times of their lives?

It's more of a ministry type of position. I can kind of relate to them. I'm not saying I know how they feel, but I lost my parents at an early age. My mom and sister got killed, and a year later my dad died, and I was still a teenager. I had so much death and loss throughout my life, so it's like God gives me the words to

say to calm them down at the time when it is needed.

How have you expanded your business, Ruby Funeral Services & Crematories?

Once I opened my business in 2014, I knew my chapel would not be big enough for the community. The existing chapel only seated 200, and that's not big. My goal was always to extend it out to at least 400 to 500 people to accommodate all of the family members, especially the ones that might not go to church. Because a lot of people don't go to church, but that doesn't mean that they shouldn't have a nice funeral service.

So I started on phase one in 2019 when the business was located at 1520 E. Washington St. I expanded the chapel. I added crematories for both humans and pets; everything downstairs was brought upstairs. My embalming room, a four-car



Ruby Davis with her two children, Sammie Lee Wright Jr. and Kathyrn Macol Johnson.
PHOTO COURTESY RUBY DAVIS

garage, all of that was brought on one level. I completed all of that in 2020.

Now I am working on phase two. We started in 2021 and it should be complete this summer. Phase two is Ruby's Recreational Community Center, a banquet hall and community center. The banquet hall will seat between 250 to 300 people. You can have life celebrations there, brunches, family reunions, baby showers or wedding receptions. It's open to the public for any of that.

Do you have a pet peeve as a business owner?

A lot of people don't like to follow the rules. For instance, I feel florists should come in

on the day of the funeral service. But a lot of the flower shops want to drop them off one or two days ahead of time and when I tell them 'no,' they start telling me what the other funeral homes do. But I'm not the other funeral homes! My rule is, flowers come in the day of the funeral service.

If it's going to be at a church, take the flowers to the church. Don't bring them here so we have to transport them again to the church.

Have you experienced prejudice as a Black business owner?

People do it in a subtle way. Just a little bit, not much. But I've learned to look past that because I understand that's just going to be the way it is, regardless. It doesn't change me, because I wasn't raised like that. In my eyes everybody is the same.

How have you been involved in the community?

I am affiliated with my church, Abundant Faith Christian Center, and make community donations. I don't get to do a lot of in-person volunteering because I have to run my business. The business doors are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but I answer my phone 24 hours a day. And when I don't have a funeral service on a Saturday, that means I have the whole weekend off to come up with ideas to better the business or do other things.

What would people be surprised to learn about you?

I'm a country girl who used to chop cotton. I am the first one in my family to own a funeral business. My son, Sammie Lee Wright, Jr., has come aboard as the crematory operator and I want to get him familiar with everything. And he has three boys who are teenagers, and my goal is for his sons to have their first jobs in here.

What advice would you give to young people today?

Stay dedicated and committed to whatever you decide to do. Consistency is the key. It's not going to be easy, because if it was easy everybody would be doing it.

What would you like to have on your tombstone?

Job well done.

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The *Springfield Business Journal* proudly features 40 leaders who are under the age of 40 in the Springfield and neighboring business communities. These individuals are selected based on their contributions to our local business community and the community in which they reside. They represent, in part, the future of business in our community and in central Illinois.

The selectees' career paths, educational background, and community affiliations are varied. They represent the best and brightest from a wide range of occupations. You can expect to hear more from and about these leaders in the years ahead. The program is able to continue due to the commitment of local businesses that realize the importance of acknowledging these up and coming business leaders and supporting community business programs.

Visit springfieldbusinessjournal.com to view selectees from previous years.

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Ketki Arya

Age: 38

Occupation: Real estate agent, boutique owner, stager

Email: karya@thegroup.com

Education: Bachelor's degree, social science, Dayalbagh University

Family: Sons, Om and Ved

Affiliations/community activities: Member of the Rotary Club of Springfield, president of the Indian Association in Springfield.

What is your guiding principle in life? When you become fearless, you become limitless!

What would you like your life to look like in five

years? 10? I definitely want to see myself making more money but also be using that money to give back to the community. I want every kid to have a safe place to live and I also want to help people, who have ideas and are hard-working, turn their dreams into small businesses in our community.

What would you like to give back to your community? I believe that we need to give back to the community every single day, in whatever small or big ways we can. I own three businesses and received a lot of support from people, and I would like to do the same for others. I want to do anything and everything to support every woman or man who is hardworking and wants to make something of their life.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? In real estate, you deal with all kinds of personalities. Being a woman, it is sometimes very challenging to deal with people. I had to teach myself a lot of patience, get a thick skin and not to get discouraged just because one person was not nice. Every day is a new day which means new issues, new challenges, new people. It keeps me on my toes, for sure. But it is also fun for all those same reasons.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I did not know that what I had started as a job just for fun, would lead into a career I needed in order to support my children after my divorce. I would have worked twice as hard, if I had known. I have no regrets, though. The great thing about life in this country is that it's never too late!



Greg Bishop

Age: 39

Occupation: Talk radio journalist and associate editor, The Center Square/Illinois Radio Network, and host of Springfield's Morning News on 92.7 WMAY

Email: bishoponair@gmail.com

Education: Bachelor of Arts, communication, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Spouse, Meghan

Affiliations/community activities: Friends of the Chatham Area Public Library, Sangamon Valley Radio Club, Illinois Legislative Correspondents Association, American Cancer Society ambassador.

What is your guiding principle in life? My desire to seek truth while giving courtesy to all voices in civil

discourse, in addition to a strong and determined work ethic, help guide my daily efforts from sunrise to sunset.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? Community preservation of history and culture remain paramount. I hope Springfield and the surrounding communities continue to bring all walks of life together to share in community spirit and giving.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? There are no stupid questions. Be even more curious and never shy away from asking tough questions. Don't forget to have fun.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Being integral in creating a statewide newswire service that continues to develop into a national operation with growing readership across the state and country while providing a local audience with important information through programs like "The Council Roundup," local newsmaker interviews and highlights of business leaders are some of my most fulfilling accomplishments.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? Raising thousands of dollars for the American Cancer Society through their October Breast Cancer Awareness campaign showed me the incredible generosity of our community. As Meghan and I shared updates about her continued recovery from a breast cancer diagnosis in the COVID era, we were encouraged by the community's support.



Thomas Bazan

Age: 39

Occupation: Senior budget analyst, Illinois State Board of Education

Email: tombazan@gmail.com

Education: Master of Public Administration degree, University of Southern California

Family: Spouse, Elizabeth

Affiliations/community activities: Kiwanis Club of Springfield-Downtown, James Project, Sangamon County Historic Preservation Commission, Young Philanthropists, Cherry Hills Church, Knox College alumni council.

What is your guiding principle in life? We have been blessed to be a blessing to others. Every day I have the option to find ways to use the gifts and blessings I have been given to encourage others.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I hope that our community can work together to effectively use the resources we have, including those in the public, corporate and nonprofit sectors. We can learn from those with different perspectives, interests and short-term goals. When we use what we have collaboratively and efficiently, we can increase community unity and pride, and, because it is thriving, make Springfield a place that more people want to call home.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? Professionally, I hope that I am working to identify and solve problems, and helping develop and equip others to do the same. In the community, because I love learning about organizations in Springfield, I hope that I am better able to make connections and work alongside problem-solvers to address community needs.

What would you like to give back to your community? Throughout my education and career, I have had people who encouraged me, and I want more people to have that type of support. Sometimes, it is the little things that stick with us, and I have enjoyed being part of projects that seem to be those little things that people can hold on to.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Two things stand out. The first is kicking off the Kiwanis Karts project, which provides mobile resource carts for the medical staff at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital. Seeing these two organizations work together to help kids in creative ways has been encouraging. The second is the research my capstone team provided on a methodology to quantify the potential impacts of privacy guidelines in the United States. I am still proud of how our team rose to the challenge of learning a field and developing a framework in a short window of time.



William Bishop

Age: 33

Occupation: President and CEO, Solid Ground Solutions, Inc.

Email: william@sgs-inc.com

Education: Master's degree, business, Benedictine University

Family: Fiancée, Natavia Wilson and children, William Bishop V and Navi Rose Bishop

Affiliations/community activities: Minority Trades Network, Laborers 477.

What is your guiding principle in life? Believe Strive Achieve (my company motto).

What led you to your current career? I wanted to create 100 jobs to help 100 families.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I hope that we can continue to grow and make this city a great place to raise a family.

What would you like to give back to your community? I would like to give back hope. I want the kids and young adults to see that, even though they may be from the east side of town, they can still be successful and make a difference in the community.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? COVID made me realize that everything we take for granted at times can just disappear overnight, so enjoy all the small things and time you get to spend with family and friends.



Jay Boulanger

Age: 35

Occupation: Volunteer services coordinator, Springfield Memorial Hospital

Email: boulanger.jay@mhsil.com

Education: Attended Lincoln Land Community College

Family: Spouse, Michelle and children, Ryleigh, Ellie, Avery and Rosie

Affiliations/community activities: Kiwanis Club of Springfield-Downtown board member, The Salvation Army, United Way ambassador.

What is your guiding principle in life? Jeremiah 29:11.

What led you to your current career? I have

always had a passion for helping others and being involved in my community. It began in 2009 when I was working as a special needs aide. After leaving that role, I wanted to find a way to stay connected to young kids with mental disabilities. In 2012, I started the "Toss for Autism" cornhole tournament. Over the course of eight years, we were able to raise over \$40,000 for the Jacksonville School District 117 Special Education Department. I was in retail mobility sales for seven years, which allowed me to help build integrated solutions for my customers. In 2018, I transitioned my career into the staffing industry as a recruiter for a locally owned business. That position allowed me to fulfill my passion for helping others succeed. In March of 2020, I was presented with my current role as volunteer services coordinator with Springfield Memorial Hospital, which allows me to oversee all recruitment and onboarding of volunteers.

What would you like to give back to your community? I want to be able to provide a positive influence for the youth in our community. I want children to know their community believes in them and will provide the support needed to thrive.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My hope and prayer, now more than ever, is that we can come together to provide a more unified community for all. Being proud of who you are and where you come from is the seed needed to produce growth to make our community better and stronger.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path?

Do not let anyone tell you that you cannot do something you are passionate about. Hard work pays off.



Laura Briggs

Age: 36

Occupation: Founder/CEO, The Freelance Coach and Operation Freelance

Email: authorlaurabriggs@gmail.com

Education: Currently pursuing a doctorate degree in business administration, Franklin University

Family: Spouse, John

Affiliations/community activities: Illinois Women in Leadership and Innovate Springfield.

What is your guiding principle in life? "Build it bigger than you." When we start businesses or give back to our community, it's important to think about the

legacy we leave behind for others.

What led you to your current career? My husband served in the U.S. Navy for 14 years. Becoming an entrepreneur allowed me to grow a freelance writing and digital marketing strategy career that picked up and came with me as we moved 11 times. Now I get to give back to others by coaching, teaching and even leading a nonprofit that provides free entrepreneurship training to military spouses.

What would you like to give back to your community? Springfield is a vibrant community. I hope to help inspire the next generation of aspiring young business owners here.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? I left my job as a teacher to pursue freelance writing without any formal training or education in professional writing, so I am entirely self-taught. Military spouses often face unemployment rates as high as 28%, and I knew I needed a career that would give me flexibility, potential for growth and could follow me anywhere. I started my business while working a full-time job and juggled both for 13 months before going out on my own.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Publishing five books and being selected to deliver three TEDx talks has been monumental for allowing me to help others who want to build freelance or remote careers for themselves. It's an honor to be a voice for independent contractors and military spouses.



Nathan Boyle

Age: 33

Occupation: Vice president, chief investment officer and wealth adviser (CFP® and MRFC®), Peterman Financial Group

Email: nathan@petermanfinancialgroup.com

Education: Master's degree, cell and molecular biology, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Spouse, Hilary and children, Nora and Bennett

Affiliations/community activities: Annual Animal Protective League giving tree, donations and involvement; active member of Christ the King Parish; monthly educational radio program, "Money Talk," on channel

1450 AM Springfield and donations to various local charitable organizations.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I was born and raised in the Springfield area, so of course it is close to my heart, but I would love to see a more active, involved community, especially with local businesses. I once read that Springfield was one of the top 10 cities nationally that supported chain companies. Can you imagine if that energy was directed locally? I would love to see more diverse, enjoyable cafes, beer gardens, bars, children's activities and restaurants.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I have always been a big goal person, so I love these questions because I literally have them up on a board in my office that I look at every single day. This is one way I keep focused and motivated! My goal is financial freedom, which to me right now is the ability to make a good living while getting to spend quality time with my family, friends, traveling and being involved with my community.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Well, obviously, by looking at my professional designation, the initial obstacle was trying to really educate myself and learn my new field (in which I had no background) to the extent to best serve my clients, and I took that very seriously. Secondly, one of my greatest obstacles was being a young adviser (I started at age 23), and having the confidence and ability to sit down with experienced investors and show them I can provide value. Luckily, I had an amazing firm, mentor and support system to help me through that.

What is your greatest professional achievement to date? Achieving the Apex Award within my broker dealer, which is the highest production award level available to advisers. Each year, every adviser internationally is listed in their production range, so this was a great honor.



Jared Canterbury

Age: 33

Occupation: Senior financial adviser, Merrill Lynch

Email: jared.canterbury@ml.com

Education: Bachelor's degree in business administration, University of Southern Indiana

Family: Spouse, Whitney and children, Camden and Olivia

Affiliations/community activities: Menard County Men's Club president, Lake Petersburg Association board member, assistant varsity baseball coach for PORTA/AC Bluejays and basketball and baseball coach for the Petersburg Athletic Association.

What is your guiding principle in life? Be humble.

What led you to your current career? I knew I wanted to help people and be my own boss. After doing research and talking to many different people in the financial services industry I chose to become a licensed financial adviser. The finance industry can be very complex and, right now, people need help navigating their finances. I have since achieved the Certified Financial Planner™ designation which equips me with a breadth of knowledge with which I can better assist my clients.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? Growing up in Petersburg, Springfield was the "big city" where we came to eat dinner, see movies, go shopping and see the historical sites. Now that I work downtown, I can see and feel the energy every day. The lifeblood of the Springfield community is our young families. Seeing all the growth geared toward families is very encouraging. My hope is we continue to encourage business growth, which provides stable and desired jobs, to make Springfield and our surrounding communities a destination for families.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? Honestly, I hope it looks a lot like it does now. I would like my marriage to still be incredible and my kids to be kind and healthy. As one of the founding members, I hope the Menard County Men's Club has increased membership and has helped better the community in ways I never imagined. Career-wise, Merrill Lynch equips me to help many families and businesses, so I hope I can stay on the same growth trajectory I am now.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? People don't care about how much you know, they want to know how much you care. Don't worry about trying to impress people with your knowledge. Ask good questions, understand their situation and show them that you care. Your knowledge will show itself with your recommendations and advice.



Betsy Butler

Age: 36

Occupation: Senior director, provider recruitment and integration, Springfield Clinic

Email: bebutler@SpringfieldClinic.com

Education: Master of Business Administration, Benedictine University

Family: Spouse, Michael and children, Mabry and Rhett

Affiliations/community activities: Association for Advancing Physician and Provider Recruitment, Living Faith Baptist Church.

What is your guiding principle in life? It's simple, be kind to people.

What led you to your current career? For as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by the field of medicine. It was clear that science was not my strong suit, so I looked for ways to combine my skills with medicine. As I was finishing my undergraduate studies at University of Illinois Springfield, I worked as an intern in public affairs at SIU School of Medicine, which solidified to me that health care was my passion. I began my career with a radiologist group as a marketing coordinator and as I continued learning, evolved into the world of physician and advanced practice provider recruitment.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish I had taken to heart earlier the 5x5 rule, which is, "If it's not going to matter in five years, don't spend more than five minutes being upset about it."

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? The team that I am surrounded by is talented, creative and energetic. I love partnering with them and coaching them to aid in their professional and personal growth. Together, we've been able to bring many talented and much-needed physicians to our community.

What would you like to give back to your community? I hope to be a light, to embrace opportunity when I find it and to leave it a better place.

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Congratulations to this year's **Forty under 40!**

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A photograph of a woman in a polka-dot top and dark pants walking up a set of stone steps on a university campus. In the background, a man in a suit is also on the steps, and another person is walking down them. The building has classical architectural features like columns.

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Brian Chandler

Age: 35

Occupation: Owner and head coach, Capital City CrossFit

Email: brian@c3crossfit.com

Education: Bachelor of Arts, business administration, Monmouth College

Family: Spouse, Morgan and Melon the dog

Affiliations/community activities: Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln Young Philanthropists, Monmouth College Pipers Club.

What led you to your current career? I began using CrossFit to improve my own personal fitness while in

college per a recommendation from a friend. I gravitated towards the concept and variation that CrossFit provided and was instantly hooked. We did not have a comprehensive strength and conditioning program for the athletes while I played baseball at a Division III school. After experiencing the benefits of CrossFit for myself, I developed a strength and conditioning program using CrossFit methods for my baseball teammates. After working with them and seeing their improvements, I knew I was interested in coaching CrossFit as an occupation.

What would you like to give back to your community? Creating a fun and rewarding experience at Capital City CrossFit is important to me. Enriching our members' lives through social connection and overall wellness is a big goal. Providing people with a place to come and feel good is something I try to give back to my CrossFit community daily. In the larger Springfield community, we put on a large annual fundraiser which provides donations to local organizations. In the past 10 years, we have supported Girls on the Run of Central Illinois, GenH Kids, WILD Canine Rescue, Simmons Cancer Institute, The Outlet, The Student Yoga & Mindfulness Project, Friends of Sangamon County Animal Control, Special Olympics Illinois, and United Cerebral Palsy Land of Lincoln. Last year, we hosted a monthly activity night for the youth at The Outlet. The boys came to us for exercise in the form of games and spent time with the coaches for male mentorship.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Like most small businesses, the global pandemic really shook us. With an unexpected shut down of fitness facilities, we had to quickly improvise to keep our members active and engaged. Through lending out equipment packages, online instructional videos, motivational challenges, etc., we were able to keep our members on track even though we couldn't see them in person. That was a great reminder that we have a strong community of members, for which I am grateful.



Chris Costello

Age: 30

Occupation: Video producer, The Storyteller Studios

Email: chris@thetorytellerstudios.com

Education: Bachelor of Arts, communication, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Spouse, Cayti and dogs, Brooks and Bowie and cat, Tux

Affiliations/Community Activities: Volunteer with the Land of Lincoln Honor Flight and Make-a-Wish Foundation.

What led you to your current career? It always seems to surprise people when I say this, but skateboarding.

I started skating when I was around 13 years old and committed my entire young adult life to it. I first picked up a camera because of skateboarding and the rest happened from there. Skateboarding instilled in me a strong do-it-yourself mentality and hooked me into a community of amazingly creative individuals who have all played a part in whatever success I may have.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? That no one truly knows what they are doing and you don't have to either. The key, however, is to always try and to always be doing something even if it doesn't feel like the work will directly lead to whatever end goal you have in mind. You have to make a lot of your own opportunities in this industry, and it can be really hard to know what route to take or how to even begin, but there is truly no single right way to make it. The only wrong way is to do nothing.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? In 2020, I received a Mid-America regional Emmy award for my directorial work on "Face to Face," a short-form, spoken word video poem performed by Dr. Wesley Robinson McNeese. "Face to Face" features Dr. McNeese giving a powerful testimony of what life as a person of color was like in central Illinois during his youth. His performance is cast on the backdrop of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot and the video features Dr. McNeese literally standing inside excavated foundations of homes that were burned down in the riot. "Face to Face" was also awarded a 2020 Communicator Award for Excellence. It was produced through the University of Illinois and funded by the University of Illinois' Presidential Initiative to Celebrate the Impact of the Arts and Humanities and created as a part of The Humanities Innovating New Knowledge (T.H.I.N.K.) Project.



Amanda Compton

Age: 35

Occupation: Business owner, Sangamon Reclaimed

Email: amanda@sangamonreclaimed.com

Education: Master of Education, information technology, University of Missouri

Family: Spouse, Tanner and son, Stetson and step-daughter Willa

Affiliations/community activities: Springfield Area Home Builders Association, Innovate Springfield, Illinois Local, Illinois Farm Bureau.

What led you to your current career? My family led me to where I am today. My mother is one of the kindest and hardest-working women I know (closely behind my grandmother). She has served at Springfield Memorial Hospital for many years. My father is an entrepreneur and has instilled that drive in me. He, too, has served not only Springfield but the entire nation through the businesses he has created and grown. I spent 12 years teaching middle school math. I learned hard work, discipline, structure, innovation and creative thinking. About a year ago, I took time off to be with my son. He is the one who pushed me to pursue this business, a business where I can serve my community through product design, job creation and opportunity and one I can navigate while also spending as much time as possible with my children.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? A small business is challenging at the best of times. Not only do I own Sangamon Reclaimed with my sister, but I also own a photography business, and my husband owns and runs a business as well. I have brought with me skills I learned in the classroom, but it's been a rather dramatic learning curve. From managing my team to improving processes in the business, acquiring the best technology and updating systems, to cash flow and, of course, woodwork. I guess the biggest obstacle is time – time to do the day-to-day work, grow Sangamon Reclaimed the way we know we can and raise my family alongside my husband, all while finding the time to give back to my community.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish my younger self had known it was OK to take the risk. I wish I had stepped out and into my potential far sooner. Yes, it's hard and yes, it takes work, time and energy, but it is so worth it. I hope I can teach my son this early in his life.



Eric Creviston

Age: 39

Occupation: Owner of Springfield, Petersburg and Rochester Monument Companies

Email: spfldmonument@gmail.com

Education: Attended Manatee Technical Institute

Affiliations: Petersburg Veterans Memorial Park, Give Kids the World, St. Jude children's Research Hospital, Monument Builders of North America.

What is your guiding principle: Give and you shall receive.

What led you to your current career: All of my life, I have taken great pride in helping others. Being able to start a business in such a niche market and helping a family design a stone to memorialize their loved one is what drives me day in and day out.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield: My hope is that our local leaders continue to see the importance of locally owned businesses and that residents continue to shop local.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? My beautiful family healthy and happy, and my business prospering.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date: I have been afforded the pleasure of assisting so many families over the past four years with choosing the best option to memorialize their loved one. Seeing their expression of gratitude with the end result each and every time is my greatest achievement.

FORTY UNDER 40 2022



would like to *congratulate*

Taylor Stevens,

Client Care Manager Springfield Office

on being named one of
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Taylor has been a part of our Springfield office since its opening in 2019 and we are proud to have her on our team.

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Congratulations to Jacqueline who founded Meraki Salon and Spa in 2017. As the founder and owner of Meraki, she leads her team with hard work, dedication, and a true passion for what she has created. Jacqueline has built herself, her career, and her family around the core values of Meraki and we are so proud of her.

If you are interested in joining our team or becoming a guest of Meraki, please call us at (217) 679 - 7736.

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HEALTH SYSTEM



Lauren Kulavic

*Human Resources Director,
HSHS St. John's Hospital and
HSHS St. Mary's Hospital*



Prashant Jagtap

*Medical Director,
HSHS St. John's Hospital
Intensive Care Unit*



Stephanie Cullen

Age: 39

Occupation: Creative services manager, SIU Medicine

Email: scullen59@siumed.edu

Education: Bachelor of Arts in graphic design, Robert Morris University

Family: Spouse, John and Rusty the dog

Affiliations/community activities: Association for Women in Communications, Illinois Local, Innovate Springfield, Rising Tide Society, Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association.

What is your guiding principle in life? Create your own opportunities. You can wait for opportunities or you can go out there and create your own, which is much more empowering.

What led you to your current career? I have always had a passion for art but didn't think it could actually be a career until one of my art instructors in college suggested I take a graphic design course. I fell in love with it and changed my major. I have worked for a local magazine, a local printer and then for the Illinois House of Representatives. With more than a decade of experience in graphic design, I decided that I wanted to work on projects that I had a passion for, and so I left politics and started working as an independent graphic designer. As a freelancer, I worked for many local businesses and organizations, one of which was SIU Medicine. I learned about and admired the SIU vision, better health for all, and realized how rewarding a career in health care could be. When a position in the marketing department opened, I immediately applied.

What would you like to give back to your community? I would like to continue to support small businesses, especially artists and makers. Small and local businesses bring creativity and originality to a city and are the lifeline of every community. When you support small, you help a city to be able to grow from the inside.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Right after high school, my father passed away. He had always taught me how important college was. Although my original plan to go away for school was derailed, I stayed close to home, worked two jobs and paid for college all on my own. Finding my passion, graphic design, helped me to get through the difficult times and stay on track.



Megan Fellows

Age: 37

Occupation: Foster care director, Family Service Center

E-mail: mfellows@service2families.com

Family: Spouse, Brandon, stepsons, Braydon and Bryson and parents, Jeffery and Robyn Myers

Affiliations/community activities: Vice president of Forever Home Feline Ranch, Rochester Lions Club.

What is your guiding principle in life? My guiding principle is resiliency. In social work, there are many roadblocks and barriers to overcome both professionally and personally. No matter the situation, a child advocate must keep in mind that the best interests of

the child needs to remain the priority. Thinking outside of the box, networking and collaborating when I am told "no" all help me stay focused in challenging situations. It's vitally important to turn negative outcomes into opportunities to advocate for others.

What led you to your current career? Almost 24 years ago, I was adopted out of foster care. Although I did not go to school to become a social worker, I was hired by a private agency after college to work with youth in care who were also involved with the criminal justice system. Almost 15 years later, I continue to passionately work in this field focusing on reuniting children with their birth parents and, if this is not possible, creating forever homes through adoption.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My greatest hope for Springfield is that one day there is a temporary shelter or residential facility (or both) built to house youth in care that do not have any other place to go. Older youth in care deserve a more dignified alternative to sleeping in an office or being placed far away from any family, resources or support that they consider important to them.

What would you like to give back to your community? Continuing education, training and support to those who have thought about fostering a child, and working with those families to overcome barriers to become licensed as foster parents and help them advocate for children in need. The state of Illinois in general is facing a shortage of foster parents and in the Springfield community specifically, there is always a need.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? First, motivation cannot come from money or recognition, rather, it must come from personal fulfillment of helping others in need. Second, never work harder than your clients. That ultimately doesn't help anyone.



Mallory Fairless

Age: 38

Occupation: Nonprofit tax partner at Crowe LLP, adjunct professor of accounting at Illinois College

Email: mallory.fairless@crowe.com

Education: Master's degree, accountancy, Loyola University Chicago

Family: Spouse, Luke and children, Harrison, Hayden and Haisley

Affiliations/community activities: Lincoln Land Down Syndrome Society board treasurer.

What led you to your current career? My husband, 100%. When I graduated college, like many recent graduates, I really wasn't sure what to do with my life and what the next step would be. It was my husband that encouraged me to finish my third major in accounting, do an internship at Crowe and move to Chicago for graduate school. He has always believed in me, even when I haven't believed in myself, has always encouraged me to take the big steps and has been my biggest supporter through everything. I would not be who I am today without his unconditional love and support.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? The biggest obstacle I have had to overcome on my career path is learning how to adapt to the unexpected. In 2014 my husband and I had our first child, our son, Harrison. Shortly after he was born, it was suspected and later confirmed after weeks of waiting, that he had Down Syndrome. At the time, my husband and I were scared, confused, and at times felt hopeless. We had no idea what to expect, how we would raise a child with special needs, how our lives and our careers would be impacted and how the world would receive him. Our young, naïve selves, who felt lost in despair with our son's diagnosis, couldn't have been more wrong. Today, Harrison is a thriving 7-year-old who has brought more love and joy to our lives than we ever could have imagined. Having him has completely changed our perspectives and has made us learn to pivot and grow when things don't go as planned, to lean into the things that are truly important in life and has taught us to celebrate every single accomplishment, big or small.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? It is all going to work out in the end. You may take a different road to get there, and you may even have to lay down the path so others may follow you, but you will get there, and it will have all been worth it.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Making partner at Crowe LLP and being asked to teach at my alma mater, Illinois College.



Daniel Fox

Age: 39

Occupation: Translational scientist and clinical research administrator, Springfield Clinic

Email: fox4success@gmail.com

Education: Ph.D. pharmacology neuroscience, SIU School of Medicine

Family: Spouse, Bree and daughters, Scarlet and Violet (deceased)

Affiliations/community activities: Director of Clinical Research – Springfield Clinic; black belt and karate instructor at the Okinawan Karate Club of Springfield, president of the board of directors of Innovation Autism.

What is your guiding principle in life? Everyone, no matter their journey or destination, deserves kindness and respect.

What led you to your current career? After I'd spent years traveling across the nation, my daughter was diagnosed with a terminal illness, and so I returned to Springfield to be with family. Violet passed away in 2019 and I have dedicated my career to advancing medical research in hopes future families will not have to feel the hardship of losing a child.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? For it to be the national center of clinical research. Springfield has a unique and dynamic network of health care facilities that, if organized correctly, could lead the nation in diverse clinical trial enrollments.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? In five years, I'd like to be an executive leading innovation in my field. Within 10 years, I'd like to be a mentor to help the next generation of innovative thinkers find their path to success.

What would you like to give back to your community? Love, kindness and support to those who are experiencing tragedy.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? The path is never what you plan it to be. Be patient, look for the positive landmarks and consider every fork in the road carefully.



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CONGRATULATIONS MEGAN!

Family Service Center is excited to congratulate Megan Fellows on being selected for the 2022 Springfield Business Journal's Forty Under 40. To learn more about how The Family Service Center can help you, contact us today.

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All of us at Memorial Health are proud to contribute to the health of our community.

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Jennifer Love

System Administrator,
Emergency and Trauma Services
Memorial Health



Michael Kos

Vice President, Revenue Cycle
Memorial Health



Jay D. Boulanger

Volunteer Services Coordinator
Memorial Health



Jason Gibson

Age: 37

Occupation: Assistant vice president of lending, West Central Bank

Email: jgibson@westcentralbank.com

Education: Associate degree, criminal justice, Lake Land College and studied sociology, Eastern Illinois University

Family: Spouse, Salena and children, Joseph, Carson, Chase and Bexley

Affiliations/Community Activities: Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Chatham Chamber of Commerce, director of marketing and communication

and baseball coach with Chatham Baseball and Softball, Inc., coach with Chatham Community Football League, vice president Team Gibson Hunting.

What led me to my current career? That unbelievable feeling when someone hands you the keys to your first home! I will never forget that feeling. I was 21 years old and didn't know anything about the home buying process, especially the financing portion. My lender was amazing and was there for me every step of the way. I wanted to be that guy; I wanted to help people through the very stressful process and ultimately, I wanted to be a small reason for those massive smiles on closing day.

What has been your biggest professional achievement to date? I pride myself on treating my customers with respect, honesty and transparency. I believe in being there for them from the application process to the closing table, while always maintaining an open line of communication. Being selected as the top mortgage lender in the 2021 Best of the Capital Awards really humbled me. I am proud of the fact that my customers took the time to nominate me for such an award. Building lasting relationships, so that my customers come back to me, is very important.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I absolutely love what I do. Providing top-notch service to my customers and seeing the smiles on their faces on closing day is the best. I would like to continue to build those lasting relationships. I would like to be known as the top choice for anyone in the area for their mortgage and banking needs. With several children who are very involved in local sports, I hope to still be coaching. Who knows, maybe I'll try my hand in local politics!



David Hennessy

Age: 37

Occupation: Attorney, Brown, Hay + Stephens

Email: dhennessy@bhsllaw.com

Education: Juris Doctor, University of Miami

Family: Spouse, Marissa and children, Olivia, Jack and Stella

Affiliations/community activities: Springfield Old Capitol Art Fair executive board member, 100+ Who Care in Springfield chair.

What is your guiding principle in life? Be a good person, work hard, never sacrifice quality for convenience and focus on family.

What led you to your current career? I saw several admirable attorneys as a child, including John Squires, Dan Hennessy and Joe Hartzler, and thereafter focused on becoming an attorney myself.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? To attract new businesses and talent while retaining and growing the many outstanding businesses that drive our local economy.

What would you like to give back to your community? I would like to lead by example in promoting the incredible nonprofit organizations in the Springfield area that provide so many invaluable resources and services to those in need.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? The importance of both personal and professional relationships in enabling professional growth and success.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Becoming a partner in the oldest law firm in Illinois.



Jacqueline Goleash

Age: 30

Occupation: Hair stylist, owner and founder of Meraki Salon & Spa

Email: jacqueline@merakispringfield.com

Education: Graduate of University of Spa and Cosmetology Arts

Family: Spouse, Brandon and sons, Beckham and Hudson

Affiliations/community activities: Local First, Illinois Local, donated lunches for health care workers during COVID, annual holiday market supporting local businesses, Angel Tree, haircuts for medical patients during

long-term hospitalizations, donated new seating to an elementary school class, sponsor for several children's sports teams.

What is your guiding principle in life? Meraki, "The soul, creativity or love put into something. The essence of yourself that is put into your work." The word meraki means to do something with passion, with absolute devotion and undivided attention. My guiding principle in life is to work hard and find passion in doing so, to always be honest with myself and others, to always be passionate about my career and what I stand for, always devoting myself to what it is that I am doing, whether that be at work or with my family and boys.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? As a small business owner, COVID was one of the biggest obstacles I had to overcome. During that time, the salon was closed for 11 weeks. It was sink or swim, so I decided to put my business foot forward and focus on how to grow. To put it simply, get more education. I chose to be driven in a time of uncertainty, focusing my efforts in leadership-oriented classes. I was lucky to have my team, family and friends to lean on for support and I truly believe we overcame so many obstacles and are now stronger than ever!

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My greatest professional achievement has been to grow Meraki quickly in just a year. I was able to purchase my current location and grow from a team of five to my dream team of 22. These girls are my family and it's something I have always dreamed of creating. Finding each individual that lives by meraki and my core values has always been something that is so important to me, and I've found a team of women that stand right by my side. Also, this year we have become a center for education by being able to provide continuing education hours.



Alysse Hewell

Age: 35

Occupation: Chief experience officer, Troxell

Email: ahewell@troxellins.com

Education: Bachelor of Art, journalism, Indiana University

Family: Spouse, Steve and children, Leighton and Graham

Affiliations/community activities: Licensed Illinois property and casualty agent and Hope School ambassador.

What is your guiding principle in life? The only person you can change is yourself.

What led you to your current career? I was working in marketing for five years in Chicago, but I loved my childhood in Springfield and wanted to raise a family in the same environment. So, I moved back here and joined the Troxell insurance team. I started doing marketing for the agency and over the last eight years have worn a number of hats including sales and management. Within the last year, I was honored to accept a new position as chief experience officer (CXO). This role puts me in a leadership position at the agency that focuses on leading our team to be more customer and employee-centered. I believe having strong mentors both personally and professionally have helped guide me to the position I am in today.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I hope that we can continue to grow our community and create more career opportunities. I want our community to be safe for our children now and well into the future.

What would you like to give back to your community? I would like to donate more time to help mentor or develop the future of this community.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Never stop learning, ask more questions and trust your instincts.

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Daniel Fox, MPH, PhD

DIRECTOR OF

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Dr. Prashant Jagtap

Age: 38 years

Occupation: Physician, HSHS

Email: drpnjagtap@gmail.com

Education: Doctor of Medicine, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota

Family: Spouse, Manasi Hulyalkar and children, Arjun and Veer.

Affiliations/community activities: I try to participate as much as possible with HSHS, its mission outreach and St. John's Children's Hospital.

What is your guiding principle in life? May all beings be happy, may all my thoughts, words and

actions contribute in some way to the happiness of all.

What led you to your current career? Considering the biggest treasure as health, to be able to support and care for anyone during their lowest time in illness may be considered as the most noble profession and opportunity that one may get.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? Given the talent and resources in Springfield, the hope is for Springfield to be a regional hub and destination for all medical professionals and services.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Being able to bring world-class critical care services and building one of the biggest and thriving ICU practices in the region and state of Illinois.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? Enduring the pandemic in the past two years and taking care of countless patients and spending endless hours doing that have humbled me, reminding me to value "now," friends, family, well-wishers and colleagues with gratitude.



Ashley Jenkins-Jordan

Age: 34

Occupation: Attorney and deputy chief of staff to the Illinois Senate president

Email: ashleyjenkinsjordan@gmail.com

Education: Juris Doctor, Northern Illinois University

Family: Spouse, Terrance, daughter, Markayla, parents, Windol and Josephine Jenkins and siblings Steve, Windol Jr. (wife Sierra) and Grace

Affiliations/community activities: Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated - State of Illinois social action chair and Kappa Sigma Zeta chapter member, Phi Alpha Delta Law

Fraternity, Inc. member, Central Illinois Black Bar Association member, Capitol Historic Preservation Board member, National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws member, The Outlet board member and vice president of the Springfield Public Schools Foundation.

What is your guiding principle in life? Always strive to do the right thing and treat others as you want to be treated.

What led you to your current career? My desire to help others and be a public servant led me to become a lawyer. At the Senate, I am able to serve nearly 13 million residents of the state of Illinois by working to ensure that enacted policies are fair, equitable and just.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? That a solution is found to house and assist the homeless population, including providing access to medical care and mental health and substance abuse treatment. Springfield is growing and innovating, but it is important not to leave behind any resident or community.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? As a double minority in the legal and political fields, I had to overcome being overlooked and underestimated on many occasions. I took advantage of those opportunities to use my voice, share my knowledge and maintain my integrity so that those coming behind me would not be subject to the same assumptions or stereotypes.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My greatest professional achievement is my ability to work with individuals from various backgrounds and viewpoints, and guide them towards accomplishing a common goal. This ability has allowed me to negotiate numerous contentious legislative measures and bring them to a bipartisan compromise.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? The COVID pandemic has made me evaluate my life priorities and put a greater emphasis on my family, and my health and wellness.



Kathleen Killion

Age: 38

Occupation: Certified public accountant, director of state accounting, Office of the Illinois Comptroller

Email: kathleen.killion@illinoiscomptroller.gov

Education: Master of Science, accounting, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Spouse, Chris Mueller and Franny the dog

Affiliations/community activities: National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers; Special Olympics of Illinois; PAWS for Life Springfield.

What is your guiding principle in life? To make

time for the important people and things in life, both personally and professionally.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? My position at the comptroller's office challenges me on a daily basis. The evolving needs of the state will impact how we handle payments, and I hope to continue this work in the future.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I think that many people, at the beginning of their careers, are incredibly scared to make a mistake and in the long run that can really limit their potential for advancement. Over the years, I have learned that nearly every mistake is fixable, as long as you address it quickly. Learn from the mistake, take action to make sure it doesn't happen again and move on.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? We are in the midst of a major project to modernize our statewide accounting system for the first time in over 20 years. This system processes 15 million payments per year for the state of Illinois. This is the biggest project of my career and will have huge impacts for the state.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? The pandemic has required the workplace to be more flexible than I ever imagined was possible, and government is not traditionally known for its flexibility! I learned that we may have plans A, B and C that are working today, but next week we may have to pivot to plan G or even Z.



Angie Koester

Age: 37

Occupation: Human resources manager, Crawford, Murphy & Tilly

Email: akoester@cmtengr.com

Education: Bachelor's degree, business, Purdue University

Family: Spouse, Jared and children, Jake, Jimmy and Addi

Affiliations/community activities: Chatham Jaycees, Chatham Friends of the Parks, American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC), Society for Human Resource Management, Illinois Women in Leadership and the Chatham Baseball & Softball Association.

What is your guiding principle in life? Surround yourself with the right people – positive, uplifting and encouraging people who bring out the best in you. Then, be that person back!

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? That even when you feel like things are not going according to plan, to worry less. It will all work out!

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? I am excited to have been asked to speak at the National HR conference for ACEC in San Antonio, Texas, and will do so this coming fall.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? I believe that each event has molded you into who you are today. But I would say being a working mom, while incredibly challenging to balance, has been the greatest change. It undoubtedly made me work harder, sharpened my focus and lasered in on my professional goals, and without question made me a far stronger person than I was before I had children.

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Mark Cortesi, Agent
State Farm



Allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all of the Springfield Business Journal's Forty Under 40 recipients for 2022.

Thank you for the leadership and contributions you have provided for our community.

I look forward to hearing about many more of your future successes.



Mark Cortesi, Agent
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Mark D. Cortesi, Agent

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www.growwithmark.com
924 Clock Tower Drive
Springfield, Illinois 62704





Michael Kos

Age: 38

Occupation: Vice president, revenue cycle, Memorial Health

Email: kos.michael@mhsil.com

Education: Master of Public Affairs and Master of Science, accounting, Indiana University

Family: Spouse, Melinda and children Samuel, Violet, Charlie and Baby Kos due November 2022!

Affiliations/community activities: MERCY Communities board president, audit committee of the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln board, American College of Healthcare Executives, Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA), HFMA Mc-Mahon

Illini Chapter, National Leadership Council, National Association of Healthcare Revenue Integrity and member of various committees of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association.

What is your guiding principle in life? My parents always stressed the golden rule, "Treat others as you would want to be treated." Also, be the best you can be, not from a competitive perspective, but a personal one. Character and kindness matter. Be thankful for what you have and try to help others to the best of your abilities.

What led you to your current career? Before moving to Springfield, I worked for the state of Indiana within the Office of Management and Budget. Prior to my government career, I was a pre-med student working at Indiana University Riley Children's Hospital. Having the opportunity to transition back into the medical field with Memorial Health was desirable as I wanted to continue serving others, albeit in a different field and manner. My role here has been extremely fulfilling over the last 10 years. I look forward to many more years of serving.

What would you like to give back to your community? I have been very fortunate in both my career and personal life. I would like to continue to serve our community in the current activities in which I participate and look to do more from an involvement perspective. There are two areas I would like to get more involved in: supporting more activities within the Special Olympics and supporting my wife in her desire to get more involved with green space and nature preserve activities to keep our community healthy and open to all who like to enjoy our natural environment.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My greatest professional achievement is getting to work with my direct team and our colleagues within revenue cycle on a daily basis. I am so thankful for each and every individual on our team. Their dedication to our mission, our patients and our community is awe-inspiring.



Adam Lockwood

Age: 36

Occupation: Owner, Exposure Real Estate Media

Email: info@exposurerealestatemedia.com

Education: Bachelor's degree, kinesiology and sports studies, Eastern Illinois University

Family: Partner, Ingrid and children, Ema and Weston

Affiliations/community activities: Central Illinois Customer Service Association member and Abe Fest board member.

What is your guiding principle in life? Never stop learning and working on yourself. Once I started to improve my self-awareness, everything else started to fall into place.

What led you to your current career? Self-growth. I appreciate practical procedures and systems, and I love seeing projects and tasks to completion. This career allows me to be creative, help people achieve their goals and to use my strengths, such as stability and dependability.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? Being a proud parent of both of my kids where they are comfortable and happy with who they are, and giving them the tools to manage life. Also, being a successful business owner where I'm reaching my personal goals and having a work-life balance that fits me.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Myself. You get what you put in and you are your own worst enemy. Understanding what I wanted and then putting that plan in place has helped me overcome that obstacle.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Surround yourself with people you aspire to be and find a mentor and/or role model. You can learn so much from other people.



Lauren Kulavic

Age: 32

Occupation: Director, human resources, Hospital Sisters Health System, supporting Springfield's St. John's Hospital and Decatur's St. Mary's Hospital.

Email: lauren.kulavic@hshs.org

Education: Master's degree, business administration, Benedictine University

Family: Spouse, Brent and daughters, Hayden and Piper

Affiliations/community activities: Affiliated with the Central Illinois Chapter, Society for Human Resource Management for six years, serving as a board member for the last five. I recently served as the vice

president for the last four years and was certification chair prior to that.

What is your guiding principle in life? Embracing humility. None of us are perfect and I certainly am not. We tend to have this fear of making mistakes or showing weakness as we worry what others will think. Sometimes even just admitting when you are wrong can be difficult, especially to your spouse! However, being genuine and having the ability to admit your faults, I believe, helps build strong, trusting relationships with others and also gives them the comfort level to own their mistakes. To quote Dr. Stephen R. Covey, "Humble leaders are more concerned with what is right than being right."

What led you to your current career? I started my bachelor's degree in business administration. At that point, I hadn't quite narrowed down what career path I envisioned for myself. After learning more about what human resources really is, and the ability to assist organizations in the effective utilization of colleague skills and talents, I realized this is where my heart is. I am very much a people person and my career allows me to work with some amazing people on a daily basis.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Don't be afraid to admit your mistakes, and use each and every one as a learning opportunity.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? I started with Hospital Sisters Health System in 2012 when I was fresh out of college and landed my first human resources assistant position. From there I have been able to continue to grow with HSHS and truly do what I love daily. I think being able to say that and celebrate my 10 years with the organization later this year is an accomplishment of which I am very proud.



Jennifer Love

Age: 37

Occupation: System administrator, emergency and trauma services, Memorial Health

Email: love.jennifer@mhsil.com

Education: Master of Business Administration, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Spouse, Nick and daughter, Maryn

Affiliations/community activities: Emergency Nurses Association and International Association of Forensic Nurses.

What is your guiding principle in life? Do what is right, not what is easy.

What led you to your current career? I always knew I wanted to help people, and I was drawn to the emergency department because every day is different and you never know what will be coming through the doors. I was tapped on the shoulder by my leader to give leadership a try and I've been in various leadership positions over emergency services for the past 10 years. I love seeing others succeed in their professional journey, and guiding and mentoring them along the way. Leadership is about bringing out the best qualities of your team.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I hope to see leaders in Springfield and the surrounding areas work together to address health care disparities. We need improved policies for mental health and better access to care.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I hope in the years to come my family has great health and is happy. I would like to be coaching some sport that my daughter chooses to play. I hope, as a health system, we have been able to improve lives and build a stronger community.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Failure is inevitable. It's what you do with failures that makes all the difference.

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Andrea McLaughlin

Age: 34

Occupation: President, Robert's Seafood Market

Email: arobert@robertsseafoodmarket.com

Education: Associate degree, general studies, John A. Logan College

Family: Spouse, Mike and daughters, Norah and Ruby

Affiliations/community activities: At this time in my life I am focused on raising a family and learning the business. I am trying to figure out the work-life balance.

What led you to your current career? I have been working around the holidays at the Seafood Market

since I was 10 years old. After moving back home from college, I was in search for a job. I knew that I enjoyed working the holidays at the store, so I came on full time and just started learning the business from the ground up. At the time, I thought it was just going to be a job to get me by and pay the bills. I did not realize that I would become so passionate about food, serving people and developing relationships with our wonderful customers.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I would like for us to really ramp up our catering business in the next five or 10 years, in addition to shipping products on a regular basis and having a much better e-commerce presence for our store. I would also love for us to be operating in a new building somewhere on the west side in 10 years.

What would you like to give back to your community? I would like to give more of my time to the community and create a good relationship with a nonprofit that we can really make a difference with.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Having the patience of pushing through my 20s and not really having a direction. Going with my gut to keep showing up for the business, serving people and doing the best I can do to keep this business operational and profitable.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? We just received the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce Small Business Owner of the Year award, which is by far my greatest achievement.



Hilary Patterson

Age: 39

Occupation: Chief marketing officer, Prairie State Bank

Email: hpatterson@psbank.net

Education: Bachelor of Arts, communication, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Husband, Steve and daughters, Emery and Olivia

Affiliations/community activities: Springfield Noon Lions Club member, American Women In Communications member and treasurer on the board, and I also assist with school sporting events, support the public library and assist with community cleanup events.

What led you to your current career? Graduating

during the Great Recession in 2007 was a blessing in disguise. After briefly selling supplemental insurance, I knew I had to find something more stable. I accepted a full-time position in banking as a universal banker. It continues to be a running joke that, although math was never my strong suit, I have made a great career in banking. I was given many outstanding opportunities from lending to management and then was able to fully utilize my marketing and design knowledge in my current role.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? For continued diversity and amplified growth in small businesses. Springfield has some amazing food, art venues and boutiques. I hope that the city can continue to attract new residents to bring new energy to the town. It has been fun to watch Springfield grow and evolve over the last 17 years since I moved here.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? You don't have to know it all, but you have to be willing to learn, and that you make more of an impact than you are aware of. Having the opportunity to lead some amazing teams through my years in management has taught me to have more confidence in myself and the skills that I possess. I love what I do because I can say that I am learning more daily throughout my entire career.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Coming full circle from my degree to my career. My educational focus and passion were computer graphics and design. When I adjusted my major to be more generalized, I was worried that I would not get to use the skills I enjoyed. Hard work and finding ways to still use that passion throughout my career have brought me to the role that I am in now where I can use my education and creativity again.



Daniel Noll

Age: 39

Occupation: Trial attorney, Noll Law Office

Email: dan@noll-law.com

Education: Bachelor of Science, business administration, Southern Illinois University School of Law

Family: Spouse, Sarah R. Noll, children, Jon, Eva and Layla, father Jon Gray Noll and mother Ida Noll

Affiliations/community activities: My wife, Sarah, and I own and operate the Noll Law Office, which is located in the Great Western Depot (Lincoln Depot) downtown. Since it is a historic site, we keep the first floor open to the public as a museum. I serve as hearing officer for Sangamon County Animal Control and

Leland Grove ordinance violations. Midland Community Bank board member, Sangamon County Bar Association member, Illinois State Bar Association member, former chairman of the board for Looking for Lincoln and award-winning chili and chicken wing cook.

What led you to your current career? I have grown up in the legal field. My father and grandfather were lawyers. My mom was the office manager for our family's firm. In addition, I have cousins who are lawyers and judges. My ancestor, William Herndon, was Abraham Lincoln's law partner. I am very proud of my family's history in this community and in the legal field. I enjoy the practice of law, especially the trial work.

What is your guiding principle in life? I try to be a positive influence in our community. Our business is successful because the community supports us, and we try to give back as much as we can. In addition to maintaining the Lincoln Depot, through our law firm, my wife and I sponsor youth athletic programs. We are small business owners who try to make a positive impact locally in all the areas where we practice.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? I would say obtaining a "not guilty" verdict at trial with my father as co-counsel. The trial itself was not the biggest win of my career, but the experience of winning the case with my father by my side before he retired made it special.

What would you like to give back to your community? I would like the Springfield area to be better for having me around. Whether it is helping clients and their families, educating the public through our building or supporting our young athletes, I hope to positively impact this area through my work and community outreach efforts.

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Lindsay Van Zele
INB Communications Officer



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Zach Rambach

Age: 39

Occupation: Owner of Rambach Insurance Agency
Email: zrambach@acg.aaa.com

Education: Bachelor's degree, marketing and sales, Illinois State University

Family: Spouse, Rachel and children, Parker and Mia Belle

Affiliations/community activities: 2022 Blessed Sacrament School auction chair, volunteer YMCA Youth Soccer Camp trainer and youth coach, Springfield Area Community Youth Players coordinator, Springfield Area Soccer Association youth coach.

What led you to your current career? I have always wanted to help people, work within the business world and start my own business. The insurance field has given me all of those opportunities. I did not grow up wishing specifically to be an insurance agent, but it has been a driving passion of mine since I started. I love being able to advise and assist clients in covering their largest assets, along with other financial assets, as well as help them achieve their financial and personal goals, and protect their families. I am there to prepare clients for unfortunate events and provide a measure of comfort to clients during their hardest days.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I hope it continues to be great place to live, raise a family, and be a place that people are proud to call home. I want to see economic growth, improved education conditions, watch businesses thrive, protect the well-being of youth and future generations, promote involvement from the community and witness our leaders to continue give community members new opportunities.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? The largest thus far was making the decision to leave a successful career as an agent at AAA in order to take a chance to open my own agency. My biggest inspiration happens to be the biggest supporter of my business, my wife. Rachel was brave enough to follow her personal and career goals and start multiple successful businesses, years earlier. Her courage and support led me to turn my biggest obstacle into my greatest achievement.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? I truly love what I do and have a passion for sales, service and helping others. Individually, I have achieved many sales and service awards over my career. While those were great personal accomplishments, without a question, my biggest and proudest achievement is being able to grow my agency over the last several years, while leading and helping push my staff to achieve those awards as a team.



Julie Stapleton

Age: 39

Occupation: Vice president and commercial lender, Bank of Springfield

Email: jstapleton@bankwithbos.com

Education: Bachelor's degree in food, nutrition and dietetics, Illinois State University

Family: Spouse, Jake and children Wyatt, Walsh and Iris

Affiliations/community activities: Family Service Center of Sangamon County board member, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois board member, chair of Bank of Springfield's wellness committee.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I would like to think that I am doing something similar to what I do now – utilizing my resources and passion to help others. My kids will be a little bit older, so it's exciting to think how we will be volunteering together in the Springfield community as well as seeing them become connected with different organizations based on their own interests.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? There are multiple organizations that cannot function without volunteers and resources. Being an engaged member of Springfield brings people together and provides an opportunity to give back. My hope is that we continue to see an interest and increase in involvement so these organizations may continue to function and benefit those in our community.

What would you like to give back to your community? My heart. I have a strong passion for helping others and volunteer my time at organizations that improve the lives of families and children in Illinois. Within my career, I often help women and minority-owned businesses in the Springfield community.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Don't sweat the small stuff. Early in my career I spent too much energy worrying about bumps in the road. I now treat these as learning opportunities and move forward.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? Working from home during the pandemic taught me many lessons about creating a work-life balance. I am now more purposeful with my time so that I can be my best self at work and at home.



Christina Shutt

Age: 35

Occupation: Director, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

Email: christina.shutt@illinois.gov

Education: Master of Science, library science/archives management and Master of Arts, history, both at Simmons University

Family: Spouse, John and son, Jonathan

Affiliations/community activities: NPR Illinois community advisory board, Andrew Mellon Foundation and Association of African American Museums working group on accreditation, Getty Museum Leadership Institute at Claremont University, Creative Institute of Central

Arkansas board of directors. Illinois Historic Sites advisory council

What led you to your current career? While I've always had a passion for libraries and museums, I was fortunate to have a couple of teachers in high school who showed me that history could be interesting and relatable. When we learned about historical battles, we didn't read about them in text books, we assembled on the high school football field and recreated them through primary source documents and objects. I love making history relatable to people through historical objects and museums because it's in those moments that people feel seen, heard and valued.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My greatest hope for Springfield is that we would find more ways and opportunities to bridge differences and find connectedness.

What would you like to give back to your community? I would like to make the ALPLM more diverse, equitable, inclusive and accessible because I believe that the heart of our institution must represent the communities we serve.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Throughout my education and career, some people have dismissed me because they make negative assumptions based on my gender and race. For example, my high school guidance counselor was surprised that I said I was going to college because she believed stereotypes about poor Black women and their success in higher education.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? I led the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center team to achieve the first national museum accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, making it only the ninth Black cultural museum in the United States to receive such a designation. Through the process to become accredited, we expanded our visitor audience, increased fundraising, improved exhibition development and redefined operational excellence.



Jake Saladino

Age: 38

Occupation: Loan officer, United Community Bank

Email: jsaladino@ucbbank.com

Education: Bachelor's degree, business administration, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Spouse, Samantha and daughters, Addyson and Alyssa

Affiliations/community activities: Central Illinois Foodbank board member, American Business Club, former board member at Land of Lincoln Goodwill.

What is your guiding principle in life? Treat people the way you would like to be treated.

What led you to your current career? I have always had an interest in banking, finance – anything to do with numbers. When you combine that with the satisfaction I get from helping others achieve their dreams and goals, it was a natural fit.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? Being a board member at the Central Illinois Foodbank has taught me a lot about food insecurity here in Springfield. My hope is that one day this will be eliminated.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I hope that it will continue to look much like it does today, I am very grateful for how my life has turned out and I look forward to continued growth, both personally and professionally.

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Taylor Stevens

Age: 26

Occupation: Client care manager, Synergy HomeCare
Email: taylorstevens@synergyhomecare.com

Education: Leadership Springfield graduate

Family: Daughter, Eleya Rose

Affiliations/community activities: Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce team captain, Ambassadors Care Team Leader, Springfield Jaycees project chair-HSHS Children's Hospital, hosting the annual Go June for June Cornhole Benefit, organize holiday parades and activities for seniors in facilities and helping with photos for the 2022 Sangamon County Fair.

What is your guiding principle in life? My mom always said, "Be kind, you never know what someone is going through." I have carried this with me all the way into motherhood. For each decision I make, I begin with kindness, because what she said it is true. Choose kindness, always.

What led you to your current career? My greatest passion has always been to make people smile and to help in any way I could, whether that be to help with household chores, take someone's dog for a walk, raise money or simply be a friend with which to talk. Life came full circle when my job at Synergy was presented to me because I get to do all of that, but now I get to do it as a career. I love that I don't have to put on a different hat when I put my work badge on, I get to just be myself. I have the opportunity to meet with all kinds of people in the community and listen to their needs, and I have the power to help them. I can make people happy, I can help create a better environment for others, and most importantly, I get to show my daughter that, as a woman, you have the power to change lives in positive ways.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? If I could go back to myself five years ago, I would tell myself to keep my chin up and put one foot in front of the other. You are about to go on a journey, and on this journey, you will need to pack a bag that contains confidence, determination, hard work, mental strength, hustle and grit. This is not going to be easy, but it will be worth it. Keep your focus, big things are coming! Life is 10% of what happens and 90% of how you react.



Lindsay Van Zele

Age: 39

Occupation: Communications officer for INB, N.A.
Email: lvanzele@inb.com

Education: Attended Lincoln Land Community College, Leadership Springfield graduate

Family: Spouse, Nathan and daughters, Addison and Olivia

Affiliations/community activities: Pleasant Plains Village board trustee, Board of Education chairperson and council member at Zion Lutheran Church in Pleasant Plains, biannual United Way Day of Action volunteer.

What is your guiding principle in life? Treat other people with the concern and kindness you would like them to show toward you.

What led you to your current career? After joining INB as a teller in 2004, I became a teller supervisor and mentor, then moved to the communications and marketing department in 2007. Now as INB's communication officer, my focus is on ad placement opportunities, creating and designing ads and follow up after campaigns. With INB's continued growth into new markets, staying on top of our marketing campaigns is a continuing challenge I'm excited to accept. Being creative and brainstorming new ideas is one of my favorite activities. My design skills continue to improve while completing online training.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? I know that my life is going to look a bit different. I anticipate my daughters being more active in school sports, with their dance class family at Dance Creations Dance Studio, and in exploring theater and music.

What would you like to give back to your community? I will continue giving my time and talents. Growing up in Pleasant Plains, I watched how my parents and so many others volunteered their time and spent many hours improving the community. Serving as a village trustee, it is my turn to do the same. I want to show my daughters how to love your community, speak your mind and to care for the people in it.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? Since joining the church council board, I am more aware of the happenings of our church and what it takes to keep it going and growing. We have a predominantly older congregation and brainstorming new ideas and events to attract younger families is something on which we are always working. Vacation Bible School is a great event for those younger kids. It's a fun and exciting planning process.



Cody Trigg

Age: 38

Occupation: Principal at Springfield Southeast High School

Email: ctrigg@sps186.org

Education: Master's degree, educational leadership, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Spouse, Allison, a baby due June 24 and Mo, the dog

What is your guiding principle in life? Control what you can control, and surround yourself with good people.

What led you to your current career? I have always wanted to be a school principal. I was motivated at a

young age by my principals. I saw how much impact they can have on students and set them on a course for success.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I hope that we continue to focus on the youth. There are so many talented students in Springfield who are rarely celebrated. Springfield has to do a better job of letting the world know about the greatness of their young people.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? The answer to both is that I hope I am still at Springfield Southeast, and continue to make it a great place for students to go to school.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path?

Be realistic about how the pace of education goes. Understand that you may be changing the life of a student without even knowing. Make sure you show up every day with the same energy and passion, because that could be the day that changes the life of that student.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Being nominated for Administrator of the Year by my students. There is no greater honor than when your students speak positively on your behalf.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? My wife was diagnosed with cancer in June, and found out she was pregnant with our first child in October. She continued to work as a nurse practitioner during some of the worst parts of COVID; when many were calling off, she was always stepping up to help fill in. She did not let anything slow her down. She makes me want to be better every day. I hope I bring the same tenacity to my job as she brings to her role daily.



Laci Jane Willis

Age: 36

Occupation: Owner of Carpe Chic Boutique
Email: lacijane@carpechic.com

Education: Master of Business Administration, Benedictine University

Family: Married to school sweetheart with two ornery little boys, ages 5 and 8

Affiliations/community activities: Petersburg Athletic Association, Menard County Trails and Greenways.

What is your guiding principle in life? Carpe Diem, seize the day. I had a very special high school

teacher who used to say this to us every day in class and pushed us to want more from life. It became my mantra. He passed away in 2005. It was only fitting that Carpe Chic became the name of my business.

What led you to your current career? I had always had a passion for fashion and, after several years in the retail industry, I knew I needed to open my own business and share everything I had learned. I wanted to create something where I could be a mom first and build a business second. It's been tough juggling it all, but it's been so worth it!

What would you like to give back to your community? Giving back is part of our business model. I don't work to live, I work to help my customers feel more confident in who they are and build up their self-esteem. We support our first responders and military, and I am also drawn to individuals or organizations with missions or needs about which I am passionate.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I'm not sure I would change anything. Every lesson I've learned, success I've had and obstacle I've encountered has put me where I'm at now.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? While I am proud of several I have achieved, I think the most important to me is the community of women I've helped step out of their comfort zones and become more confident in themselves. Helping them realize how amazing they are is truly gratifying.

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Can Springfield reverse its youth exodus?

By Annie Fulgenzi

Think of a young person in your community with so much raw talent and potential that you just can't wait to see all they'll accomplish. They should be the future of our city, but the chance they plan to leave Springfield for college and not come back for their career is high.

It's no secret that Springfield is facing an outmigration crisis of its talented young people. From 2015-2020, Sangamon County's population of those aged 20-34 decreased by roughly 5% – resulting in a net loss of 1,885 young people, according to data from the American Community Survey.

Our youth exodus has made it clear: something in Springfield isn't working.

"Our youth are letting us know with their feet, they're marching away from our town," said Ben Hage, 34, who works with Springfield's youth as facilitator of the Sangamon CEO program. "If that's the case, then we should listen and start thinking of ways to appeal to them. It's vital for our city, our business community, to all of us. We need them, and I think we can do better," Hage said.

Norm Sims, former executive director at the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission, points out that this isn't a new issue– it's a problem many in Springfield have attempted to answer.

"Young people have been surveyed on this question many times over the years, going back at least 20 years," said Sims.

Many are quick to claim that high taxes are the issue, but Sims says taxes have never even made the top 10 reasons young people state for wanting to leave Springfield. Instead, they list problems such as poor job opportunities; lack of decent, affordable housing; poor quality of life; few opportunities to develop a social life outside of school and work; and a civic leadership that excludes young voices.

Pam Schallhorn works for the University of Illinois Extension office as a community and economic development specialist. She's lived in Springfield and now travels around the state giving programs on what prompts young adults to return or stay in Illinois communities and recently turned her attention to Springfield. She argues the key

to retaining and attracting youth is to "invest in their priorities."

Emma Shafer, a 23-year-old Springfield native, is a recent urban studies graduate from The New School in New York City. She believes in Springfield's potential and is moving back this fall to become a community organizer.

According to Shafer, our biggest priority should be focusing on density.

"Living densely in a walkable area, like a lot of young people have done at university, is really attractive," Shafer explained. "Young people don't want the status quo anymore: a suburban, cookie-cutter life driving everywhere. They want to live in a cool area with vibrancy– with historic value, but also modern amenities. I think if you put even 500 [housing] units downtown, you would see the landscape completely shift," she said.

Research from the American Planning Association suggests that Shafer is spot on. However, despite evidence we should focus on the heart of our city, Springfield development keeps sprawling out.

"We are so separated as a community. We aren't in touch with our neighbors, let alone the people across the city from us," said Shafer. "People have a perception that Springfield is stagnant. The thing is, it's not true! There's constantly so much going on, but we're so spread out that people don't hear about it."

Hage thinks the answer is two-fold. First, we need to provide young people with the essentials, such as great job opportunities. He thinks students going away for college enriches our community, but we need to do a better job of engaging teens early on and staying in touch while they're away to bring them back.

"That gives you the chance to intercept at different points in their academic career to offer opportunities: 'We know you're going to U of I, here's a summer internship you should come interview for,'" said Hage. "We have to seek them out. We can't just wait for them to seek us out because when they go to these colleges, businesses are coming to them."

However, Hage says the second piece of the puzzle is giving them a life.

"Your career isn't everything," said Hage.

"Young people want the things that are good for their souls: the arts, music, nightlife, entertainment, cultural experiences. It's all connected. If I have a job but none of these other things, what kind of life is that?"

Even when plans have been proposed to create the things discussed, Shafer feels they tend to just collect dust. She's among many calling for the hiring of a city planner for a better, more coordinated implementation effort.

Continuing to ignore our youth exodus will inevitably have devastating effects for our community. The risk we're running is economic stagnation to the point of no return, but we still have a chance to reverse the trend if we're proactive.

"There are so many things that are impacted by the outmigration of young talent including school enrollment, availability of quality health care, future leadership, a skilled workforce and business development," said Schallhorn. "That's why it's critical to develop a strategic plan to address outmigration and attract young adults back."

Despite the urgency of the situation, Schallhorn finds that young people don't feel city leaders are listening. When Innovate Springfield brought her in to give a presentation in May, she was surprised at how few civic leaders showed up.

"Most communities I give this program to have the mayor there, members of the city council, county board, school board – but we just didn't get that. That's a danger, really," she warned.

She emphasized that in order to get young people to stay, you have to show that they're both wanted and needed in the community by including their voices.

"I don't think Springfield sees the problem yet," said Schallhorn. "They're going to have to reach out to young people and give them a place at the table." SBJ

Annie Fulgenzi is a Springfield-area native and student at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, majoring in mass communications and pre-law. She is completing a summer internship at Springfield Business Journal and Illinois Times.



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Beauty OUT OF ASHES

By Annie Fulgenzi

Rachel Lauer Thomas has combined her passions for helping others and creating custom keepsake jewelry into a business that is healing hearts and minds.

Using sentimental materials such as breast milk, cremation ashes, flowers, handwriting samples and more, Rachel Lauer Thomas Jewelry creates beautiful works of art to honor life's milestones that allow clients to hold a piece of their loved ones close to them.

The majority of Lauer Thomas' work is with those who have experienced loss or are dealing with difficult personal challenges – something that she, a recovering alcoholic, is no stranger to.

For years, Lauer Thomas struggled with her own trauma and desperately searched for ways to escape herself. "I was trying so hard to fill this void I had with drugs, alcohol, art, anorexia—anything," explained the 31-year-old Springfield native.

Throughout her struggle, Lauer Thomas's best friend, Natalie Derstine, had been by her side, pushing her towards sobriety. "She tried to be the support I needed, and she was the first real friend that I had," Lauer Thomas said.

Then, in their last year of college together, Derstine died unexpectedly of heart failure at the age of 22. "It was the perfect excuse for me to spiral. I was in and out of mental institutions and AA," Lauer Thomas recalled. "I was stuck in this dark place and I couldn't get out. I wasn't ready to surrender."

For a while, Lauer Thomas was lost. She finally reached sobriety after facing yet another tragedy: miscarrying twins. "Alcohol stopped working. I couldn't numb that pain," she said.

After hitting rock bottom, Lauer Thomas' friends and family encouraged her to rekindle her relationship with her Christian faith. It was then that Lauer Thomas found her strength and her calling to help others dealing with battles similar to hers.

Lauer Thomas is a fourth-generation jewelry maker, following in the footsteps of her father, Bruce Lauer. However, it wasn't always her career plan to do so. In fact, she holds a degree in psychology from Benedictine University and originally envisioned herself doing art therapy with inmates. But, when she picked up her father's



old metalsmithing tools for the first time, something ignited in her. She had finally found what she believed God has called her to do.

Now, creating one-of-a-kind sentimental jewelry for often broken-hearted clients, she sees every part of her difficult journey as equipping her to serve. For every commission, Lauer Thomas forms a relationship with her client to create a piece that will best honor the memory they want to hold on to.

Nicole Lynn, a client of Lauer Thomas, lost seven loved ones in 2020, including her father. Lynn saved the blue flowers from his funeral and brought them to Lauer Thomas, who turned them into small, heart-shaped charms.

"I knew I wanted something blue to give all my girls on their wedding day for their 'something blue,'" said Lynn. "Rachel listened to me, and ... was very patient and kind with every change I made to what I needed."

Lynn said the pieces she has received from Lauer Thomas give her a sense of peace: "When I'm really stressed or upset, I can touch my jewelry and have an earthly way of remembering they are with me," said Lynn.

Capable of empathizing, Lauer Thomas hopes that sharing her story offers just a bit of hope for those finding themselves in the dark.

"I was there, I know what that pain looks like," she said. "The alcoholism, the depression, not knowing the Lord, then knowing the Lord, the miscarriage, losing my friend, watching my grandma pass – everything I have been through on my journey isn't for my fulfillment, but for me to help someone else go through those things with grace," she said.

On her wrist, Lauer Thomas wears a bracelet she made with a unique, multicolored stone in the middle. The stone is made of broken beads from a bracelet Derstine, her late best friend, gave her just before she died. She had worn the bracelet constantly, until it was accidentally ruined just two years after Derstine's death.

Though the splintered beads were beyond repair, Lauer Thomas kept the pieces in her jewelry box for years – a constant reminder of the heartbreak and loss of her dear friend.

"It was beautiful broken, but it had no use," she said. "I prayed for the courage to

make something out of it, and I was able to break it more and set it into acrylic to turn it into its own stone. Now, I can wear it again," she said with a small smile.

Once seemingly beyond saving, made new and with new meaning: hope, and a warm reminder that beauty and purpose can be found even in the broken. Fitting, isn't it?

Lauer Thomas doesn't often get to see the impact her work has on her clients' lives, apart from their initial reaction to receiving their ring, necklace, bracelet or whatever it may be. However, her hope is that it can give them just the slightest bit of comfort, and a step toward the peace she has finally found for herself.

"What I would like – what I would hope – is that it can be a little piece to fill that void. A piece of the puzzle for that God-shaped hole. To offer a little bit of comfort, and show them that this isn't it. There is more," she said.

"He turns ashes into beauty," she says, quoting the Bible verse Isaiah 61:3.

And so too, does she. **SBJ**

Annie Fulgenzi is an intern getting her first taste writing for the media this summer. She's a senior at SIUE studying journalism, law, psychology and political science.



Family is at the center of Dan Deweese Painting and Wood Finishing

By Pamela Savage

In January of 1978, Rich Deweese founded R.L. Deweese Painting and Decorating. Deweese did not have any experience as a painter, and he had no intention of becoming a painter. However, he was searching for a career opportunity, and that's where the story gets interesting.

Deweese's wife, Susan, was attending a women's prayer group when a friend mentioned that she needed some painting done in her home. Susan quickly answered, "My husband can paint your house." And with those words, Deweese had an answer to his career search, and a multi-generational family business was born.

Nearly 50 years later, that family business is still thriving under its current name: Dan Deweese Painting and Wood Finishing. The youngest of seven children, Dan has vivid childhood memories painting alongside his siblings. In fact, the family has a photograph of Dan's brother, David, sleeping with a step-ladder in his crib at the tender age of 3 years old. Sister Amy Deweese-Peterson remembers that the family's telephone was used as the business line, and the siblings got used to

answering the phone with, "Deweese's."

Dan and Amy share that their father never pressured them to paint, he simply gave them the opportunity to do so over summers. "We did get paid, but we all got fired or quit during those summers," says Amy.

"Our parents were old-school," says Dan. "They were not uptight, and they let us do and try anything" to learn the painting business.

These childhood experiences stuck with the Deweese siblings, and all seven have painted at one time or another. Today, five of the seven, along with their father, Rich, work together at Dan Deweese Painting and Wood Finishing. Dan never imagined the business would become family-owned, but that familiarity has given the business an edge.

Says Amy, "We all know each other quite well, and we are loyal to one another. We can count on one another."

Dan adds that each sibling specializes in one aspect of the business, and that means they don't second-guess each other. They trust each other to get the job done right. "No one tries to act like they are better than

anyone else in the family. I guess we got all of that fighting out of our systems as kids."

The camaraderie and admiration for one another's skills doesn't just apply to family. Dan tries to bring the same connectedness and appreciation to all of his employees. Everyone in the company generally works no more than 40 hours per week. Dan tries to avoid overtime, and weekends are respected. Spending time off with friends and family is a priority for the business, as is connecting with the community. "We want to go above and beyond for one another, and we aim to treat our employees and customers like family," he said.

And what of the next 50 years? Dan hopes that the younger generations will continue the business, but isn't certain what the future holds.

"I just don't know. I'd like to say it'll be around for another 50-70 years, but I guess we will see. None of us set out wanting to be painters, and we fell into it anyway." **SBJ**

Pamela Savage is a freelance writer living in Springfield.



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Hope Humphrey-Walker, owner, and Grant Bradley, general manager. PHOTO BY ANNIE FULGENZI

Humphrey's Market hangs restored sign honoring its history

By Annie Fulgenzi

The late Henry Humphrey once traveled hundreds of miles across the country to acquire the delicious fruits and vegetables sold at the family store. Now, the hand-painted side of the semi trailer he once drove has found its permanent home, hanging outside the historic business.

Humphrey's Market, located at 1821 S. 15th Street, is the oldest independent grocery store in town, providing goods for Springfield dinner-tables since 1932.

Hope Humphrey-Walker is the third generation to own the business. She remembers her father's trips all over the country to pick up the store's seasonal fruits and vegetables. To her, the new sign installation is deeply sentimental.

"I'm overwhelmed with just a sense of pride. It's honoring my family and all of the hard work

that they did to get us to this point. It's a daily struggle, but to be able to do this and see the community support just lets you know you're going in the right direction," said Humphrey-Walker.

Watching Ace Sign Co. raise the newly restored sign has been impactful on the community as well. Grant Bradley, the general manager at Humphrey's Market says customers have been pouring into the shop sharing memories the artifact has brought back.

"One of the guys said he's lived down the street his whole life and remembers playing outside when Henry would get home from a long trip on Sunday morning and honk the horn as he came by," said Bradley. "I think it's touched a lot of local people on the South-East side that have been coming here for the last 70-plus years."

Humphrey's Market has a rich legacy in Springfield, and it's one Humphrey-Walker hopes to see live on.

"We have deep roots on this side of town, the neighborhood has been wonderful to us. It's our mission to continue our family tradition of serving people with a warm, friendly atmosphere and all they could possibly need to make a wonderful family dinner," said Humphrey-Walker. **SBJ**

Annie Fulgenzi is a Springfield-area native and student at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, majoring in mass communications and pre-law. She is completing a summer internship at Springfield Business Journal and Illinois Times.

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Many projects underway for The Springfield Project

By Jacqueline Simone Jarju

Dominic Watson, executive director of The Springfield Project, has started working to redevelop, revitalize and uplift the Southtown neighborhood since securing funding earlier this year to purchase the building at 1100 South Grand Ave. East.

The Springfield City Council allocated \$179,235 from a Community Development Block Grant to purchase the former beauty supply store at the southeast corner of 11th Street and South Grand Avenue East, with the goal of opening a social innovation center focused on minority entrepreneurs.

In the meantime, The Springfield Project is hosting community pop-ups, summer youth programming and small business support services. Amid bare rooms and floors sectioned off with masking tape, there is a beam of light shining inside. Watson recently launched community pop-ups, allowing organizations to utilize the space until the build-out is complete.

"It's really a melting pot of resources that traditionally aren't targeting our communities – the Black and Brown community – and aren't necessarily centralized in areas that we reside in," said Watson.

The first pop-up, a weekly community satellite location sponsored by Lincoln Library, is open for anyone to check out books, obtain or renew library cards and connect to virtual resources every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The Springfield Project has been in existence since 1996. Watson assumed leadership of the organization in September 2021 and also serves as president of the Springfield Black Chamber of Commerce.

TSP's summer youth employment and empowerment program, now in its 13th year, will start in July.

Watson said the eight-week program has served 600 middle and high school students who receive paid on-the-job training at minimum wage, professional development training and access to employers.

"This program is essentially a steppingstone to employment opportunities that they can acquire on their own," said Watson.

The program has been primarily funded by the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln and other community partners. Last year, Watson partnered with the Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance, the Springfield Airport Authority and Sangamon County State's Attorney Dan Wright's office.



Dominic Watson, executive director of The Springfield Project, is launching a social innovation center focused on minority entrepreneurs. PHOTO BY BRANDON TURLEY

"It's an empowerment opportunity," said Watson, "So oftentimes, what we've come to understand is not just Black and Brown youth – but underserved, or those who are underrepresented – lack access to resources that those who are represented have."

Watson plans to expand into a year-round model to create a path to long-term employment. "The goal is not just to focus on one particular area, but providing skills to increase employability."

Set to launch this fall, the Community Access Project (CAP) 1908 is a comprehensive social innovation center. Using a co-working model, the center will house shared offices, equipment, leadership development and essential business services for a nominal fee.

"There will be some built-in value, such as access to programs and training that are built around incubating businesses and accelerating them," said Watson.

By adding an atrium to connect to the adjoining building, Watson said he is creating a

business complex that will also include the former Southtown movie theater and 20,000 square feet of space behind the buildings.

"We want to be able to influence that entire block, whether it's working with developers or actually taking the lead," said Watson. "We're coming up with a comprehensive strategy to address a lot of the challenges for those who are seeking employment, or those who are looking to further their career."

Watson said programming partnerships with University of Illinois Springfield and Innovate Springfield are also in the works. "We're always looking for additional partners that may be interested in coming in and providing various services to the community that we're trying to serve." **SBJ**

Jacqueline Simone Jarju moved to Springfield to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Public Affairs Reporting at University of Illinois Springfield. She has a professional background in public and community affairs journalism, program development and social justice.

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Illinois Small Business Development Center relocates to Growth Corp offices

Two organizations deepen long-standing partnership

By Michelle Ownbey

The Illinois Small Business Development Center for Central Illinois has relocated to the office building of the Small Business Growth Corporation, a local certified development company that has been a longtime partner of the Illinois SBDC. The two organizations are now operating out of the same office at 2401 W. White Oaks Dr.

"We had just moved to 130 W. Mason St. in December 2019, and of course in March 2020 we moved home," said Kevin Lust, director of the Illinois SBDC for Central Illinois. Lincoln Land Community College previously hosted the organization, first on the LLCC campus and then at the LLCC-Medical District building.

The Illinois SBDC offers assistance to individuals and small businesses by providing confidential business guidance, seminars, business resource materials and more. Nearly all programs and services are free to those needing assistance.

The organization is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the state of Illinois' Department of commerce and Economic Opportunity and Growth Corp.

"Growth Corp has been a sponsor of the local office since 2013," said Lust, noting that the move to shared office space was a natural fit. "Federal money comes to the state, and the state is required to match that – DECO matches the federal funds and makes grants to the local hosts. The hosts are then responsible to match what they receive each year, which can include in-kind contributions."

"Growth Corp, for the better part of a decade, has been supporting the cash match component," said Lust. "And as a nonprofit, they're eligible to be a host." Lust noted that over the years, it became more difficult for LLCC to provide the cash match. "One of the challenges that LLCC faced was making funding available before the state funding was actually in hand – there have been a lot of delays with the federal funding coming through the state, but Growth Corp is willing to support that."

Last year, Growth Corp increased its annual investment by 30%, and since those



Kevin Lust, director of the Illinois SBDC for Central Illinois. PHOTO COURTESY KEVIN LUST

funds are matched by state and federal partners, the Illinois SBDC was able to increase its total budget by more than 60% and provide additional services in the 10 counties it serves.

"It's expanded from just me to a team of four of us, plus a program assistant," said Lust. "We're back to having a team, which we haven't had locally since 2016."

Sara Vanhala, communications director for Growth Corp, said the transition will also allow the Illinois SBDC to have a more visible presence. "We've created a dedicated website, as opposed to a page on LLCC's website."

While Growth Corp typically works with more established businesses that are ready

to purchase real estate or equipment utilizing an SBA 504 loan, Vanhala said there is still a logical connection with the Illinois SBDC.

"We do get a lot of calls from people who are looking to start a business or need help with other aspects of their business, and we've always referred people to the Small Business Development Center," she said. "It will be a great transition to the 504 program when they're ready to lay that permanent foundation."

Lust agreed that taking the partnership to the next level was a logical choice. "My sense of it is, we've come home. The support of Growth Corp has been there for years, and now we've made it a more formal relationship." **SBJ**



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Dealing with The Capital City Deal Lawyer

By Holly Whisler

Jennifer Schoats Flack, The Capital City Deal Lawyer, has been practicing domestic and international deal-making for over 25 years. She specializes in business law and says that when you break it all down, it's all about the exchange of power.

Schoats Flack explained, "One thing I've learned through the course of my life and my practice, it's all a series of reciprocity and exchange, and you need to understand how power works in your life." She said there are three ways of gaining power: "You earn it; people give it to you; or, you steal it. These are the basic principles of the power exchange."

According to Schoats Flack, power is earned when you are competent and you know what you're doing; the more you do, the better you are. When you are powerful in your work, you are trusted because of that power. For example, someone gives you power because they respect you.

Now, you can undermine that by showing that you don't know what you are doing. Also, you can have a position of authority, but that doesn't mean you have power, especially if others don't think you have earned your authority, Schoats Flack noted.

She pointed out that currently, the principles of power are at play in the media as campaign ads are pervasive. The implied message of each ad is: if you don't do this, or you don't do that, there will be negative consequences. The candidate's ad puts them in the place of power, saving voters from negative consequences that are certain to happen if the other candidate were to win the election. She illustrates an example of a power thief: "If you vote for this candidate, then your taxes are going up, but if you vote for me, I'll take care of you."

How do you know if you are in a situation where power is being manipulated? "When you have a visceral response, it is likely that someone is stealing power from you," explained Schoats Flack. Understanding the principles of the power exchange, Schoats Flack said, "has served me very well in negotiating business. Whether it's a \$10,000 deal or a \$1 billion deal, a simple or a complicated transaction, it's about figuring out what people need so I can put together a win for my client. The larger the transaction, the harder it is to figure out what a client needs."

She said, "People always know what they need, but they rarely confess it because they might feel it's a weakness; it's really their superpower."

Schoats Flack and her husband, Dr. John Flack,



Jennifer Schoats Flack started her boutique law firm, The Capital City Deal Lawyer, to encourage and work with other entrepreneurs. PHOTO BY KESHIA BARBEE

grew up in Oklahoma under "Jim Crow America," as she called it. They have moved over the years as his career has advanced. Prior to moving to Springfield in 2015, they lived in Michigan, where she was a law partner for 22 years.

The couple moved to Springfield when SIU School of Medicine pursued Flack to be the chair of the Department of Internal Medicine. Schoats Flack said she does not mind following her husband because, she joked, "I like him."

When Schoats Flack announced her move to Illinois, her law partners wanted to continue their professional relationship. For the next four years, she lived and worked from Springfield for three weeks, and then did the same in Detroit for one week. She said, "It became a grind. I was in two places at once, but wasn't in either." She eventually began her transition from the firm in Michigan to opening her own firm in Springfield.

The official opening of The Capital City Deal Lawyer was on April 1, 2019. She specializes in business law and works in the areas of general business transactions and relationships, mergers and acquisitions and strategic alliances. Licensed in Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota, the main mission of The Capital City Deal Lawyer is to support entrepreneurship.

Schoats Flack said, "Some clients put me on retainer, and some need me on an hourly basis to do a contract or something, and sometimes people just need to talk, or ask a question. In the

initial conversation I can tell a person if I can help them, or if I think they need to see a different attorney."

Schoats Flack takes a holistic approach to business law because it's not just about the legal issue, it's about what you are trying to accomplish and then considering how it will affect you personally and how it will affect your family.

She said, "The work I do is usually with private companies, but those people have lives, and the decisions made will affect their families. If I'm talking with someone in a family business, and if there's a conflict, I make it known that I am not in the business of breaking up families. I will work to solve the problem and save the family business, if I can, because at the end of the day – you will still be family, and you'll be having Thanksgiving dinner together."

She said, "Clients trust me," which she attributes to her holistic approach to practicing law. "You care about the major aspects of their lives, and you want to celebrate them. It's not about me. It's about letting them know that I care about what happens to them, and that they are not just a billable hour."

Schoats Flack and her husband have five daughters and six grandchildren.

She said, "The move to Springfield has been a remarkable journey for us. People have been extraordinarily supportive. They have embraced us wholeheartedly." **SBJ**

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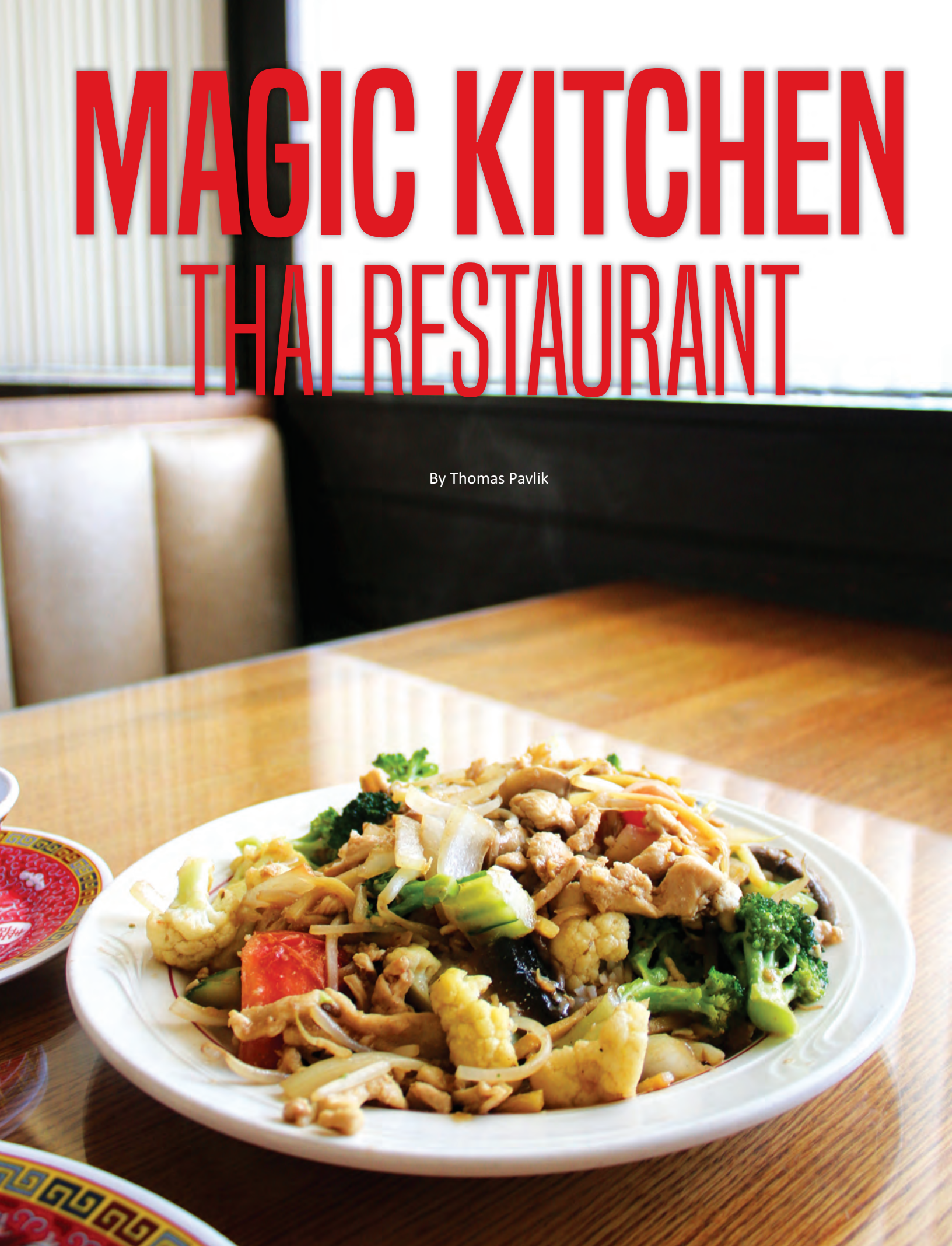
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MAGIC KITCHEN THAI RESTAURANT

By Thomas Pavlik





Facing page: Stir fry with vegetables and chicken. Above, clockwise from top left: Stir fry, egg rolls and larb with chicken.

I guess I've been around long enough to remember back when Romanesque used to operate out of Magic Kitchen Thai Restaurant's second location near Springfield High School. As much as I love Italian food, I think I'm happier with good Thai food in close proximity to downtown.

Magic Kitchen is on Lewis Street, just off of Jefferson near Springfield High School. Because it's tucked away a bit, if you blink you might miss it. There's little by way of interior decoration other than a few TVs and some pieces of Asian-inspired furniture or fixtures.

My guests and I arrived on a very pleasant day quite early in the lunch hour. We were the only table at 11 a.m. But by the heart of the lunch rush, Magic Kitchen was in full swing. Fellow diners included some state workers, construction crews and others who were out for a social lunch.

Service was uniformly excellent; food came out quickly and our specific requests (mostly for a variety of dipping sauces – more on that shortly) were efficiently handled.

The menu is about what you would expect from a Thai restaurant. Spicy dishes are appropriately labeled, and most every entrée comes in a lunch-sized or dinner-sized portion. The menu is generally broken down into appetizers, soups, entrées with noodles, entrées with rice and a handful of vegetarian dishes. Prices are quite reasonable for the portions and quality, with most lunch entrees at \$9.75 and dinner entrees at \$10.95.

My dining companions are regulars at

Magic Kitchen, and generally tend toward the same dishes. We started with a few orders of egg rolls (four per order, served with peanut sauce – \$3.75). However, because the Angel Wings appetizer (deboned chicken wings stuffed with vegetables and noodles – \$8.95) was unavailable that day due to continuing supply chain issues, I got to toss a few new dishes into the rotation: The larb (\$8.95 – chicken, beef or pork with Thai spices, cilantro, green onion, chili peppers and a bowl of sticky rice, eaten in lettuce cups) and the papaya salad (\$8.95 – shredded carrots and green papaya, tomato and garlic mixed in spicy sauce).

The larb was a definite winner. This is a vibrant and refreshing dish with a wonderful combination of spices and vegetables. Initially put off by the somewhat unfortunate name of "larb," my guests quickly warmed to it. The same held true for the papaya salad. This is a Thai classic, and Magic Kitchen nailed it with just the right mix of sweetness and heat, just about a perfect flavor and texture combination.

The egg rolls were right out of the fryer and paired well with the two dipping sauces provided at our request. I like things quite spicy, and immensely enjoyed the Thai hot sauce that was served at our special request.

Although we had hit the appetizers hard, we all decided to order main dishes. We went with the stir-fried chili paste with chicken and basil (\$9.75), the ginger pork (\$9.75) and the pad thai (\$9.75).

The chili chicken was ordered medium-hot. I sneaked a taste and found the advertised

heat level to be appropriate. The rice was moist (dry rice is the worst) and was a nice accompaniment, while the Thai basil added a fragrant note that hinted at notes of licorice and cinnamon.

I went with the pad thai. This dish is made of wok-fried rice noodles with bean sprouts, egg, fried tofu, green onions and ground peanuts together with your choice of pork, chicken, beef or shrimp. Fresh lime wedges are served alongside to add the necessary blast of acid that helps brighten the dish. I could have used a few more ground peanuts to amp up the texture I crave in this dish, but overall, it was a well-balanced offering. All dishes can be customized to your individual level of heat, and I asked for it to be hot. Magic Kitchen delivered in this regard, too. It wasn't so spicy that the flavors were drowned out, but it was enough to get your attention.

Although I didn't manage to taste the ginger chicken, the smell of fresh ginger had my mouth watering. It was reported as hitting all of the correct flavor combinations. I guess that's the reason it's his primary dish when dining at Magic Kitchen.

As with many restaurants, this might not be the place to bring a client or prospect you've just met. But, if they enjoy Asian food, or just good food, it's well worth a visit. **SBJ**

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Pritzker signs bill to expand mental health services

New law also offers employment incentives for people in recovery

By Peter Hancock, Capitol News Illinois

Gov. JB Pritzker signed a bill June 10 aimed at expanding the state's mental health workforce and improving access to mental and behavioral health services throughout the state.

An omnibus mental health bill passed unanimously out of both chambers this spring. Among other things, it makes it easier for out-of-state providers to become licensed in Illinois and enables people whose licenses have lapsed in the past five years to be reinstated.

"As governor, as a father and as a person who grew up in a household impacted by addiction, mental health care has been an issue that is important to me," Pritzker said at a bill signing ceremony in Chicago. "Personally, I've always said that we need to pull mental health out of the shadows of stigma in order to truly advance holistic health care. And it didn't take a pandemic to show us the extent of our mental health crisis. But it's clearer than ever."

The new law also establishes a tax credit program for employers that hire individuals who voluntarily state that they are in a recovery program for mental illness or addiction.

It also authorizes the Department of Human Services to award grants or contracts to community clinics for training programs for those pursuing licenses as clinical social workers, clinical professional counselors and marriage and family therapists.

"We need a mental health care workforce that is robust enough to get people help when they need it, not after months on a waiting list," Pritzker said. "By investing in behavioral health workers in training, we ensure that Illinoisans get the quality, comprehensive mental health care that they deserve, while diversifying our field of practitioners to be more representative of the communities they serve."

David Jones, the state's behavioral health officer within the Department of Human Services, noted that in 2019 a state task force



Gov. JB Pritzker signs legislation June 10 that seeks to expand the state's behavioral health workforce and improve access to mental health services. PHOTO COURTESY BLUEROOMSTREAM.COM

estimated that by 2030 Illinois would have a shortage of more than 3,300 behavioral health treatment providers.

"When inadequate staff exists to serve people in behavioral health crises, pain and trauma are perpetuated, and less healing and recovery occurs," he said. "Today, we are witnessing action to alleviate the pain of mental health and substance use disorders faced by so many."

State Sen. Laura Fine, D-Glenview, who chairs the Senate Behavioral and Mental Health Committee and was a lead sponsor of the bill, said there are only 14 behavioral health care providers for every 10,000 residents of Illinois.

"It is very frustrating to hear that patients who are seeking inpatient treatment are denied care despite having empty beds, only because there's simply not enough providers available to offer them the quality and experience care that they deserved," she said. "This law

works to change that."

Pritzker conceded that SB 3617 alone will not solve the health care workforce shortage in Illinois, but he pointed to other steps the administration has taken in recent years to relieve the shortage, including expanding scholarship opportunities for nursing students.

"We help schools that are graduating nurses to do that faster, making sure they're all qualified to do it, but making sure they can get through the process of getting licensed faster as they graduate," he said. "So those are examples. There is much more to do. I don't want to suggest this is the only thing that has been done or that we will do."

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Becoming the boss: Top skills for new managers

By Kelly Gust

Finally – the big promotion! After lots of hard work you’ve made the leap from individual contributor to manager or supervisor. While definitely an exciting time, this career transition represents one of the most difficult to make. Getting promoted isn’t just a higher-paid version of your previous job, it’s an entirely different job, one that requires managing your time differently, and nurturing a variety of new skills. It can also be challenging to navigate relationships with people who used to be friends, but who now are direct reports. By intentionally developing necessary competencies, facing possibly uncomfortable conversations with confidence, and being willing to tackle new managerial responsibilities, this career transition can be successfully navigated. First, let’s address the actual roles and responsibilities of a new manager. An individual contributor has to simply show up, get along with others and do their job within the policies, procedures and culture of the organization. But as a manager, the list is much longer, and is mainly comprised of completely novel tasks that an individual contributor never had the opportunity to learn. Here’s an eye-opening short list:

- Redefine relationships with former peers; build relationships with new peers
- Value success of direct reports and make time for them
- Organize and lead meetings, budgets, priorities and projects
- Deliver performance feedback, coach and develop others
- Hire and onboard new team members
- Set the climate of the team; motivate others and resolve conflict

- Live the company values and manage compliance

If you are a first-time manager or if you supervise one on your team, each of these areas will need to be intentionally developed. Such learning can occur through formal training or through a performance feedback loop: prepare for the task, perform the task and then receive feedback on the task. A first-time manager needs a checklist of these skills, and should deliberately work through them over the course of their first year on the job.

One of the most delicate areas to navigate, which I frequently get asked about, is the transition from peer to boss. A first-time manager is suddenly responsible for the performance reviews of people they used to go to barbecues with on the weekends. As with any difficult conversation, it’s best to just get the conversation started.

I’d approach it this way: “I know things will be different with me in this new role. However, I am committed to working through it, listening to your feedback and helping you to be successful. Because we’ve been friends, I trust you and value your input, and would appreciate your support.”

A new manager can still go to lunch with old friends, but needs to consider showing equal attention to other direct reports. It’s important for a manager to remember that they’re never “off the clock” as far as their position status as a manager. Even at happy hour, a manager is still the boss and needs to act the part.

Rather than worrying about lunch or

weekend plans, the best use of time with new direct reports is to establish regular one-to-one conversations. Start this practice right away; it opens the door to build trust, ask and get answers to questions, deliver positive feedback and coach team members. Holding regular dialogue with employees also checks the box with the new manager skill of “valuing the success of direct reports and making time for them.”

It’s equally important to begin building relationships with new peers who are also managers. Get to know them. Ask how they made the transition. Get their feedback, or perhaps even ask if a fellow manager will mentor you on the new skills you’re working to develop such as budgeting or leading meetings.

A few new manager skills such as delivering effective performance reviews, hiring and onboarding or legal issues for supervisors can be easily learned through a formal course, either in-person or online. Some larger organizations might offer such courses internally, or they are available from providers such as LinkedIn Learning, Udemy or Coursera.

Becoming the boss can be an exciting career milestone. With the right checklist of skills to develop and a focus on managing time effectively, it is a transition that can be navigated successfully, paving the way for a long and rewarding career in future management and leadership roles. **SBJ**



Kelly Gust is the CEO of HR Full Circle, a Springfield-based consulting firm that provides talent management and human resources consulting to organizations of all sizes and stages. She also serves as president of Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois.



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Employee retention credits

By Sarah Delano Pavlik

Like most things relating to COVID-19, the various government programs designed to help businesses are confusing and have changed over time. One such program is the Employee Retention Credit (ERC), refundable tax credits providing an incentive for employers to continue to pay workers during the pandemic. Created by the CARES Act, ERC was extended and expanded twice, and terminated for most employers as of Oct. 1, 2021.

Originally, ERC was not available for employers who received the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, but that provision was later changed. Businesses that took out PPP loans in 2020 can still go back and claim the ERC, but they cannot use the same wages to apply for forgiveness of PPP loans and to count toward the ERC. If your business had payroll costs that were more than the amount covered by your PPP loan, you may be able to claim tax credits for those additional payroll costs.

Employee Retention Credit is available for employers with 500 or fewer employees. It applies to all of 2020 and the first two quarters of 2021, although certain businesses are also eligible for the third and fourth quarter of 2021. Qualified wages do not include wages paid to the majority owner of the business, or to the owner's family members.

It is not too late to claim the credit. Employers can file amended payroll tax returns for 2020 and 2021 to do so.

The test for eligibility is whether or not your business was partially or fully shut down due to a government order during any part of the quarter, or your revenue declined by 20% or more for the quarter.

Determining eligibility may be straightforward for many businesses, but eligibility is not as simple as it seems. Jim Hogge, a CPA with Eck, Schafer & Punke, LLP, who helps clients claim ERC, says, "You should talk to your accountant to see if you qualify for the Employee Retention Credit if you had a full or partial suspension of operations due to a government order due to COVID-19, or significant decline in gross receipts in 2020 or 2021 compared to the same quarter in 2019."

Many "non-essential" businesses in Illinois will meet the shut-down test for 2020 and possibly 2021. However, even if a business was barred from using its facilities, it will not be eligible if it was able to continue its operations in a "comparable" manner, for example, if employees were able to continue their work at home. The IRS offers these examples:

Example 1

Employer C, a software development company, maintains an office in a city where the mayor has ordered that only essential businesses may operate. Employer C's business is not essential under the mayor's order, and therefore Employer C is required to close its office. Prior to the governmental order, all employees at the company teleworked once or twice per week, and business meetings were held at various locations. Following the governmental order, the company ordered mandatory telework for all employees, and limited client meetings to telephone or video conferences. Employer C's business operations are not considered to be fully or partially suspended due to the governmental order because the employer is able to continue its business operations in a comparable manner.

Example 2

Employer D operates a physical therapy facility in a city where the mayor has ordered that only essential businesses may operate. Employer D's business is not considered essential under the mayor's order, and therefore Employer D is required to close its workplace. Prior to the governmental order, none of Employer D's employees provided services through telework, and all appointments, administration and other duties were carried out at Employer D's workplace. Following the governmental order, Employer D moves to an online format and is able to serve some clients remotely, but employees cannot access specific equipment or tools that they typically use in therapy and not all clients can be served remotely. Employer D's business operations are considered to be partially suspended due to the governmental order because


Employer D's workplace, including access to physical therapy equipment, is central to its operations, and the business operations cannot continue in a comparable manner.

"Essential" businesses that remained open may also be eligible for the credit. For example, restaurants may have been allowed to be open for take-out, but not for dining. The prohibition on dining could constitute a "partial shutdown" if dining is more than a nominal portion of the restaurant's business. A business may also qualify as "shut down" if it was unable to do business because another business was shut down. The IRS offers the following example:

Example 3

Employer A operates an auto parts manufacturing business. Employer A's supplier of raw materials is required to fully suspend its operations due to a governmental order. Employer A is unable to procure these raw materials from an alternate supplier. As a consequence of the suspension of Employer A's supplier, Employer A is not able to perform its operations for a period of time. Under these facts and circumstances, Employer A would be considered an eligible employer during this period because its operations have been suspended due to the governmental order that suspended operations of its supplier.

If a business was not shut down, it can still qualify for ERC if its gross receipts in a quarter declined more than 50% compared to either (a) the same quarter in 2019 or (b) the immediately preceding quarter in 2020 or 2021, or, in 2021, declined more than 20% from the previous quarter.

The amount of the credit is significant. For 2020, it is 50% of wages per employee up to \$10,000, for a maximum of \$5,000 per employee per quarter. For 2021, it is 70% of wages per employee up to \$10,000, for a maximum of \$7,000 per employee per quarter. So, if you think you may be eligible, talk to your CPA or tax preparer, as always, sooner rather than later. 

This article is for informational and educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

Streamline charitable giving with a donor-advised fund

By Janet Seitz

Many businesses know it's good business to support charitable efforts in the community. However, family businesses, especially smaller ones, may be overwhelmed with many requests causing time and financial constraints.

According to the Community Foundation Land of Lincoln President and CEO John Stremsterfer, a donor-advised fund through CFLL provides a simple, flexible and tax-efficient way to streamline charitable giving. Funds can be established as active grantmaking funds with a gift of \$10,000. Funds are invested, with tax-free growth and earnings poured back into the fund to support the causes most important to the donor.

"Once you establish the fund you remain actively involved in suggesting grants from the fund to the nonprofit organizations you care about most," Stremsterfer noted.

The foundation currently administers 132 donor-advised funds, which makes up about 43% of grant-making funds there. In 2021, donor-advised funds provided grants of approximately \$2.4 million to causes championed by donors.

Stremsterfer said, "Each one of them represents a community-minded, individual, family, business or organization that wants to give back to our community in a unique way."

"As a locally owned and family-operated business," said Chris Butler with Butler Funeral Homes, "we receive a lot of requests for charitable donations. While we wish we could assist in all worthy situations, we know that is not possible. We still work through our usual processes on donation requests. The requests we process through our fund, The Butler Community Endowment Fund, are requests we usually obtain through grant requests. We do have a scholarship we fund each year, and we have a couple standing donations that we process each year from our fund."

In setting up the donor-advised fund in 2005, part of Butler's goal was to have an internal committee of associates review and evaluate grant requests and make recommendations on which grants to process.

"I wanted our larger team to have a broader understanding of the needs within our community and to have an opportunity to participate in a philanthropic effort," he said. He developed an awareness through work as a division chair with the United Way of Central Illinois and through the American Business Club's charities' committee many years ago. "Those experiences were part of the inspiration for our Butler Community Endowment fund, and the



Representatives from Butler Funeral Home present a check to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Illinois from a grant made through The Butler Community Endowment Fund. PHOTO COURTESY BUTLER FUNERAL HOME

Community Foundation developed the ideal platform for our fund and all the other funds they assist," Butler said.

"Our fund doesn't necessarily replace contributions made to civic organizations and other groups we currently assist," Butler continued. "It does, however, give these groups an opportunity to request a grant through a more formal process... The neat part of having an established fund is that having a fund helps ensure our vision of sharing will always be a part of the organization's operating structure because charitable funds are generated each year on our principal deposits."

Bill Legge, owner of Grab-a-Java, is a newcomer to a donor-advised fund but has been aware of CFLL's efforts for a long time. "I feel like I've had a unique path to our fund, given my transition from nonprofit executive to entrepreneur."

He found his experience with CFLL "to be the most trustworthy source for information on local charities and management of our charitable funds. They provide excellent guidance and advice that I simply wouldn't have the time or access to do myself. Everyone there, leadership and support staff, have been knowledgeable, trustworthy and helpful."

Legge said his business gets a lot of random requests through mail, email and at the business. "In many ways, it was a situation where the loudest voice got the most attention, rather than

the most worthy. CFLL helps us cut through the noise and focus our charitable efforts to where they'll make the biggest impact... CFLL does a lot of the legwork to know what's happening in the community, and in some cases, is involved with multi-agency collaborations to create real change in the most efficient way possible. The information they are able to assemble helps us be informed so that we can make effective use of our limited charitable resources." Three key areas on which Grab-a-Java will focus are equality, LGBTQ youth and animal rescue groups.

Donor-advised funds also offer an opportunity for succession planning, said Stremsterfer. "You can choose to engage the next generation of your family to advise grants from the fund after you pass, thus creating a legacy of family philanthropy. Or you can choose to convert the fund at death to one of the other types of funds administered by the Community Foundation to support the causes you care about. Whether through naming a successor adviser, or conversion to an unrestricted field of interest, designated or scholarship fund, donor-advised funds offer a great way to organize charitable giving while you're living and plan for a legacy of local philanthropy after you're no longer able to advise the grant-making." **SBJ**

Janet Seitz is a local communications professional, writer and artist. To share your story, contact her at janetseitz1@gmail.com.

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2025 West Iles Condominium Association, 2025 W. Iles Ave. 638-2280. Josh Hester, Michael Sauer, Brady Schroeder, Todd Hughes.

Cash Season, 2513 Sage Lane. 303-4626. Kyle Metherell.

Huck's House Washing, 11906 Clearspring Drive, Glenarm. 553-7608. Jason Lee.

1981 Digital Marketing Consultants, 927 South Grand Ave. West. 262-358-3660. Daniel Tomlinson, Aaron Stanley.

Fire and Ale, 135 Illini Boulevard, Sherman. 496-2236. Moco Hospitality, LLC.

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12 Note M.M.P., 618 S. Seventh St. 971-7979. Ben Griffin.

Ground Effects Electric, 20336 Arrowhead Road, Ashmore. 232-5950. Jeron Walker.

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3 Lady Nail Salon, 2501 Wabash Ave. 899-2204. Yu Min, Chun D. Hu, Suping Li.

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