

The background of the cover is a photograph of three women in a spa or wellness center. Two women stand in the back, and one sits in the front. They are all smiling and wearing black tops. Behind them is a reception desk with a computer monitor and a sign that says "spavida relax. escape. thrive." The overall tone is professional and inviting.

SPRINGFIELD Business JOURNAL

March 2022

Best Places To Work 2022

Q&A with Dana Lyons

New strategies for
home buyers and sellers

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A diamond in the rough

My husband did not share my vision, at least initially. Shortly after we married, we decided to move from our 1,100-square-foot house to something larger, knowing that we wanted to start a family. A friend in real estate learned about a house that was not yet on the market, so we were the first to have a showing.

The owner was retiring after running his business out of the house for more than 30 years and wanted to sell it as is. The main floor was difficult to navigate, with filing cabinets and boxes of paperwork stacked almost to the ceiling, but you could still see the green shag carpet underneath it all. The upstairs was full of furniture, although it had been largely closed off, and water came in through the hallway ceiling when it rained.

The house was constructed in 1910, making it one of the newer homes in Enos Park. Built by one of Springfield's founding families, many of the original features, including beautiful wood trim and hand-crafted door hardware, remained intact. The kitchen still had a pass-through door for ice deliveries. We peeked under a corner of the worn carpet and saw hardwood floors underneath. Best of all, it could be acquired for well below \$100,000, a fraction of the cost of similar homes in Washington Park or Leland Grove.

A recurring theme in this month's residential real estate issue is the shortage of houses available for sale. Experts have proposed various solutions, including an increase in manufactured housing construction, programs to encourage more students to pursue building trades as a career and zoning changes to make more land available for development. But there are many houses that could be brought back to life as single-family homes, rather than being demolished or subdivided into low-end rental units.

This also addresses the issue of affordability, as the red-hot real estate market has led to challenges for many first-time homebuyers and exacerbated the gap in homeownership rates for people of color. Even though we made extensive renovations to our house and hired out the majority of the work, the end result was an updated four bedroom, two-and-a-half bath house for less than half of what we would have spent buying a move-in ready house in other parts of town.

Rehabilitating existing housing stock also increases the property tax base in that area, along with appraisal values for surrounding properties – it's a win for the neighbors as well. Perhaps the current housing shortage will push more people to consider properties that could be put back into productive use for the benefit of all.

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*a
Q & A
with*

Dana Lyons

By David Blanchette

Dana Lyons is a lifelong resident of the Springfield area. When she was a senior at Riverton High School, an employment agency placed her in a receptionist position with Lincoln Land Title and Abstract Company. She later worked for Lexis Document Services and Zelle Title Company before opening The Illinois Real Estate Title Center in 2002 with three employees. The company has now grown to include 12 branch offices. In addition to managing IRETC, Dana also represents the corporate office, Investors Title, on a statewide level.

Dana and her husband, Alex, have three children and nine grandchildren and reside in Riverton.

How did you get started in title insurance?

I actually stumbled into the title insurance industry by accident. Most people who are working in title insurance would tell you they entered the same way. Either their family owned a title company or they just stumbled into it, because most people don't even understand what it is we do.

I started working for Lincoln Land Title and Abstract Company back in 1982. I had gotten that job through an employment agency and had no idea what title insurance even meant. I interviewed for a receptionist position, and the rest is history. I have been in the title insurance business for 40 years now.

What is title insurance?

Title insurance is provided when you buy or sell real estate. It protects the property owner or the bank for events in the past versus things in the future. If you were to buy a house and buy title insurance, and later you want to build a fence and your neighbor says you are encroaching on his property, the title insurance company will work with you to see if mistakes were made regarding the boundaries of the property you own or easements you might not be aware of. We are protecting your equity in that property.

Title insurance is always going to be a necessity, whether the purchase market is up or down. People may want to take out real estate loans to consolidate debt, or if there's a death in the family some property may be sold. There is always going to be work for title insurance companies.

What is your current role?

I have a unique dual role. In 2018, I was asked by our corporate office, Investors Title, to work for them as a statewide representative. In 2020, I went back to manage The Title Center, so I'm wearing two hats now.

Investors Title has investors that invest in title companies. My primary job as a state rep is to identify prospects in Illinois for ownership in our agency. For instance, there might be a group of banks in the Chicago area that might like to have their own title company. So, I would be the one to orchestrate that, bring the partners together, open that agency and be responsible for overseeing it.

Investors Title will typically have two or three title agencies in a state. In Illinois, I just found ways to continue to grow our business, and we are rather unique at The Title Center because we have morphed out into additional branch offices. That's not necessarily common within the Investors Title footprint. So, we have

been thinking outside the box here in Illinois for some time.

The Illinois Real Estate Title Center, or The Title Center as it's known, started out with three employees back in 2002 and we now have 53 employees and 12 branches including two in Springfield, Bloomington, Champaign, Edwardsville, Effingham, Fairview Heights, Jacksonville, Paris, Pekin, Peoria and Quincy and are getting ready to open our 13th location in Lincoln.

What does your typical workday look like?

My typical day is not typical. I do everything from the management of the agency with my management team to working with our corporate office. There's no stopping; opportunities present themselves and I have to take those opportunities. That's why we are moving into



Dana Lyons opened Illinois Real Estate Title Center in 2002. It was originally located on West White Oaks Drive before moving to its current location at 2055 W. Iles Ave. in January 2006. PHOTO COURTESY DANA LYONS

the Lincoln market, because there's a need there.

My job is to identify where there might be servicing issues in locations around the state, where lenders or real estate agents are not able to get their title insurance or their closings fulfilled. I have a lot of contacts, and we do a lot of networking. Where there is a need, we see what we can do.

My job is very unique, and I have a lot of excitement because there's not one day that is like the next. But I love it. I do a little bit of

everything from marketing to operations. It's somewhat rare for a manager like myself to do all of those pieces, but I love all of those pieces, and it would be very hard for me to decide which one to give up. So, I continue to try to do it all.

How has the business changed in the last 40 years?

More technology is being used, and it's giving us an opportunity to reach farther. Many of our counties have online access now, so we can do many of our property searches from our desk or home. We don't have to go to the courthouse in every single case to do our searches like we did years ago.

When I started in the industry, Lincoln Land Title had little index cards, and as we got copies of documents from courthouses the information would be entered on those cards. Chicago Title has what they call a title plant that still, to this day, houses all of those documents.

What changes did you have to make due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

We were considered an essential business, so we had to find ways to close loans. We did closings by having customers text when they arrived, called in the parties individually and did closings through a glass window, reviewed and notarized the documents they signed, disinfected everything, then called the next set of customers in.

Right before the pandemic hit, interest rates dropped to a historic low, so we were slammed with orders already. We were able to send employees home to do business as usual, but the volume was so high that it was certainly a learning experience. But we all survived it and learned a lot while doing that. I don't know that we will ever go back to doing everything exactly the way it was before.

What is the best part of your job?

Sometimes I will ask to close a real estate transaction myself just because I love that. I will volunteer to drive to one of our other agencies if we have someone on vacation to close a loan for them.

It's so exciting because every day we get to make someone happy. We have the opportunity to work with people that are making one of the biggest transactions of their entire lives, and we get to be a part of that. I love what I do.

What advice would you give to young people?

Work hard, dress for success and don't give up.



Springfield Business Journal holds a variety of awards programs throughout the year, but Best Places to Work is unique because it requires employees to nominate their own company for recognition. Instead of simply trading their time for a paycheck, these employees realize that their work is serving a larger purpose and they feel valued and appreciated for it, thanks to the culture created by the company's leadership.

As you peruse the profiles of this year's Best Places to Work on the following pages, you are bound to notice some common themes. From new employees to seasoned ones, entry level to management, there is a shared purpose and vision. Perhaps hearing their stories will inspire you to think about how you might improve upon your own workplace culture.

Our event sponsor, United Community Bank, hosts a reception and awards ceremony that is open to the business community. We hope you will join us in recognizing the 2022 Best Places to Work.

DO YOU LOVE WHERE YOU WORK?

Criteria to nominate your company:

- Must have been in business at least two years
- Be located in Sangamon or Morgan county
- Have 16 or more employees

(those with 15 or fewer are eligible for our small business awards program, 15 Under Fifteen)



Spavia



PHOTO BY BEN ROMANG



Laura Carmody opened Spavia Springfield in late 2018 with the mission of making a positive impact on the community, one guest at a time.

"Three years later, we continue to provide an exceptional experience to guests through our massages, facials and other body treatments, along with resort-quality amenities such as robes, warm neck pillows, customized music, teas, showers and private lockers," she said. "Along with me, as the owner, our leadership team is comprised of Sauscha, spa manager; and Andrea, lead massage therapist."

Treatments offered at Spavia include massage therapy, skin care, body treatments, beauty treatments and waxing. Customers may also purchase memberships to the spa in essential, premier and ultimate packages. Spavia's peaceful, resort-like setting helps customers relax, get centered and renew every month.

According to Carmody, Spavia Springfield is all about focusing on the needs of the customer. Each one selects the treatments

that best suit their needs. The therapists and estheticians care about the comfort of their guests and provide each spa treatment in the most personalized, professional manner. With the Spavia retreat room, each guest is provided with a spa robe, spa sandals and a warmed aromatherapy neck pillow for the ultimate in rest and relaxation.

Carmody feels that Spavia is a special part of the Springfield community for a number of reasons. "We are committed to the betterment of our team and our community. Spavia provides a relaxing and supportive environment for our team, with generous breaks and complementary snacks," she said. "We also offer a revenue sharing program to recognize each person's contribution to our success; when we win – they win."

Each September, the company selects an area nonprofit organization, promotes its cause on the company's social media platforms and donates a percentage of revenue from treatments to the nonprofit's cause.

Working at Spavia has been a rewarding

experience for Carmody, mostly because of the impact the organization has had on their clients. "The most rewarding component of working at Spavia is making a positive impact on the lives of our members and guests," she said. "It feels good to promote an environment of true relaxation. We help our members and guests relax, get centered and renew."

Carmody is excited to report that Spavia has grown. "Over the past year, our team has grown from 12 to 18 people," she said. "We have added a new spa manager, Sauscha, who has done an excellent job in welcoming, organizing and developing the team and the spa."

Carmody is proud of everything the company has accomplished since its inception and sees continued success in the future.

"Spavia is successful because of our amazing team," she said. "Our primary goal for 2022 is to grow and develop as a team and as a respected business in our community."

BEST PLACES TO WORK 2022 UCB



PHOTO BY BEN ROMANG

American Legion Post 32



The American Legion was chartered in 1919 as a patriotic veterans' organization which focused on service to United States veterans, servicemembers and communities. The Legion evolved from a group of World War I veterans into one of the most influential nonprofit groups in the country. Membership currently stands at close to two million people with more than 13,000 posts.

The American Legion Post 32 has been stationed in three locations since forming more than 100 years ago. "Our first location was 625 S. Second St. in Springfield," said Mike Watson, finance officer and volunteer for American Legion Post 32. "In 1982, we moved downtown to 410 S. Fifth St./505 American Legion Ave., where we remained until 2007 when we moved to our present location, 1120 Sangamon Ave. in Springfield."

American Legion Post 32 operates a bar, video gaming and The Mess Hall Restaurant, all of which are open to the public. The restaurant is open for both lunch and

dinner and offers a wide variety of food and drinks. They also rent out space and are available for buffet-style catering for 25 or more people.

"The team that works with us at American Legion Post 32 and The Mess Hall Restaurant have a great respect and love for veterans," said Watson. "They also enjoy being on the north end of Springfield where you have a more relaxed and friendly attitude. This is where our team knows everyone by name."

There are a number of reasons members enjoy being a part of The American Legion Post 32. Meeting and helping to assist veterans and their families is a proud moment each time any member experiences that honor. Also, members are proud to work with the many great people who frequent the Mess Hall Restaurant, along with the bar and the video gaming area.

The COVID-19 pandemic put a strain on a number of businesses over the past couple

years, but The American Legion Post 32 was able to weather the storm and stay strong during these tough times.

"We stayed open and kept our team working all through the pandemic, which has a lot to do with our veterans, their families and the many, many loyal people who continued to patronize The Mess Hall Restaurant, even when we only had drive-through service," said Watson. That by itself was an incredible accomplishment and something of which Watson and the rest of the post's members are proud.

Having been around for more than a century, The American Legion Post 32 plans to continue its work with this country's veterans into the future.

"We plan to continue to put out the best food and experience for our veterans and our customers at the lowest cost to them possible," said Watson. "And we will continue to be an active supporter for veterans and for Springfield and the north end."

SCHEELS



PHOTO BY BEN ROMANG

SCHEELS opened its Springfield store in 2011, a 200,000-square-foot retail shopping experience that showcases Illinois' largest selection of sports, sportswear and footwear under one roof.

According to Nikki Monari, marketing leader, "Unlike a typical sporting goods store or department store, the Springfield SCHEELS is a collection of entertainment venues; women's, men's and kids' shops; as well as sport and game shops," she said. The store stocks leading brands such as Nike, Adidas, Under Armour, Patagonia and The North Face, plus the largest gun and hunting selection in Illinois, ranging from everyday shooters to collectible firearms.

"With a team of experts focused on helping customers follow their passions, at SCHEELS you'll discover high-quality sports apparel brands for men, women and youth," Monari said.

In addition to specialty shops and services, the SCHEELS shopping experience includes a 65-foot Ferris wheel inside the store for customers to ride and a 16,000-gallon saltwater

aquarium. The Springfield SCHEELS also features a wildlife mountain, historical walk of United States presidents, rollerball bowling lanes, giant arcade games, a shooting gallery and a gift lodge with home furnishings and decorations.

As an employee-owned, privately held business, SCHEELS owes its consistent success to its empowered associates, leaders and partners who make decisions for their store and the entire company.

"As proud employee-owners, we all have a voice and thrive on a collaboration to succeed," said Monari. "SCHEELS is a family that takes pride in our people, our store and our community. Not only do we get to provide our customers with a unique shopping experience, we provide our associates with hands-on training to enhance their knowledge and allow them to provide the best possible experiences for our customers. At SCHEELS we work hard, but we also play hard."

According to Monari, SCHEELS provides endless opportunities to its employees. "The company takes pride in the store and their associates like no other. It's so great to work for

a company that cares about their customers, their associates and the community that they serve," she said.

At SCHEELS, employees make it their mission to be active members in the Springfield community through numerous forms of outreach and volunteerism. "We take pride in being able to improve the lives of others. That's why we donate our time, energy and resources to building up and supporting the members and organizations in our community," said Monari, who noted that associates volunteer both time and resources. SCHEELS has donated more than \$150,000 back to Springfield-area communities.

SCHEELS celebrated 10 years in the Springfield community last year, and the company as a whole was selected as a 2022 Glassdoor 100 Best Places to Work, along with being a Forbes America's Best Large Employers winner.

"Our goal for the future is to be the best retailer in the eyes of customers, associates and business partners," Monari said.



PHOTO BY BEN ROMANG

Prairie Engineers



Prairie Engineers, a woman-owned firm, was founded in 2010 and has grown to 70 people and eight offices. Headquartered in Columbia, Illinois, the firm also has offices in Springfield, Peoria, Hillsboro and Champaign, along with Hazelwood, Missouri, and Keokuk, Iowa, plus a recent addition in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

"Prairie Engineers is a team of forward-thinking engineers, surveyors and scientists solving problems for agencies that improve and preserve public works across the United States," said Lisa Kramer, president and founder of Prairie Engineers. "We work primarily for federal and state governments, utilities and industry providing services including surveying and mapping; civil site, transportation and water resources engineering; and structural, mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineering."

As a relatively young firm with a vision for growth, Prairie Engineers recognized the need to offer exceptional benefits and opportunities to attract the best and most talented engineers, surveyors and scientists. "We have invested heavily in growing the right group of employees with the right attitude," said Kramer. "We are disciplined about what clients we serve, and we serve them well, which makes our work lives easier and our employees can enjoy a sense of accomplishment."

Over the past 12 years, Prairie Engineers has been successful in recruiting qualified engineers. "Flexibility is a word that defines us, with policies in place to encourage work-life balance and mentoring at all career levels so that employees can grow to their fullest potential," said Kramer. "We have allowed our staff to work remotely since well before COVID-19 came along, we share half of our profits with our staff each year, we offer more paid time off than most and we offer fully employer-paid medical insurance for our staff members."

In the past year, Prairie Engineers added 20 staff members and opened its first office outside of the Midwest. The firm worked on some notable projects, including the completion of a boundary survey of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio and started a new boundary survey of Joint Base Andrews, a military facility in Maryland where Air Force One is hangared.

The firm also had several projects in the Springfield area. "We completed design work for mechanical upgrades at Camp Lincoln in Springfield for the Illinois National Guard and started working on plumbing renovations at UIS, both through the Illinois Capital Development Board," said Kramer. "We started the design of intersection improvements at the Sangamon Avenue and Dirksen Parkway

intersection in Springfield for the Illinois Department of Transportation."

Prairie Engineers reorganized its management structure in 2021 to better focus on company priorities, most notably their clients and employees.

"As we have grown over the last 10 years from a one-person company to a very diverse 70-person company with eight offices, we have grown our talents and offerings along the way," said Kramer. "We recognized the need for better mentoring of our staff and divided them into technical discipline groups focusing on our technical practices of infrastructure engineering, facilities engineering and geospatial."

The company also recognized the need to better understand and respond to clients and organized its business development and project management functions into four market groups – federal government, state and local government, departments of transportation, and utilities and industry.

This new organizational structure has served Prairie Engineering well over the past year and has enabled further growth of the company.

"We plan to continue growing both in size and geography to continue offering our employees challenging projects they can be proud to work on."

Express Employment Professionals



PHOTO BY BEN ROMANG



Jim and Carole Britton started a staffing business in 1980 and became the Springfield franchisees for Express Employment Professionals in 1983. Since that time a lot has changed, but one thing that remains the same is the company's people-first approach.

"We believe any organization is only as good as the people that work there," said Don Adams, business development manager. Express is a franchised system of more than 800 offices worldwide. The Springfield office routinely ranks within the top 10.

The employees of Express Employment Professionals are a primary reason the company has remained successful for nearly 40 years. "Kayla Edwards, JT Britton and Zachary Britton continue to keep the vision fresh, helping as many people as possible find good jobs by helping as many clients as possible find good people," said Adams. "We help companies find people in a manner that's quicker, easier and more reliable. We also help people find jobs at no cost to the job seeker."

As one of the largest 10 private employers in Sangamon County, Express routinely pays more than 500 associates working at over

100 different companies. "Staff and leaders at Express believe we are the best place to work because of the positive effects we have on thousands of lives across central Illinois," said Adams. "This opportunity to impact such a broad group of central Illinois residents with good-paying, long-term employment, allows us to provide hope and possibility to the communities we serve."

Adams noted, "At this year's International Leadership Conference, Express was recognized at the national level for serving a record-setting number of businesses and associates, resulting in the highest number of people served in long-term, core additions to our clients' organizations."

According to Adams, one of the best parts about working at Express is the daily coaching and advice they are able to provide clients and associates. Express instills its team with world-class training and development that allows all employees to add in a special blend of Springfield service. "This creates a team-based approach, focused on excellent service to both our associates and business partners," said Adams.

One way that the company was able to

achieve such a high level of employee performance was through the Stimulus of Hope campaign. This campaign was championed by Express employees Kirk Considine, Don Adams and Michael Thomas.

"The campaign focused on building relationships with our community partners to help people either gain employment or to better their current employment situation," said Adams. "This initiative resulted in hundreds of conversations across dozens of community partners and is still producing positive effects across Sangamon County and beyond."

The primary goals of Express are to be the place job seekers turn to when they need to find employment and the place companies rely on when they need to find qualified candidates.

"We believe that by doing more for the people we serve, we can have a greater positive impact on the community," said Adams. "As an employer of choice, we understand both the opportunity and responsibility to help Springfield grow through the acquisition of good-paying jobs that offer a positive work-life balance and room for career growth."

BEST PLACES TO WORK 2022 UCB



United Community Bank's Best Places to Work in Central Illinois

United Community Bank is pleased to bring our community the Best Places to Work awards program. Since 2008, in partnership with the Springfield Business Journal, UCB has presented over forty five companies with this honor and hundreds more have been nominated by their employees. Enclosed on these pages is a look back at a decade of distinction.

2022



2021



2020



2019



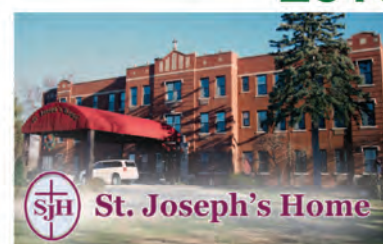
2018



2017



2016



2015



2014



2013



For a full list of past recipients please visit: ucbbank.com/bptw

New strategies for home buyers and sellers

Hot housing market upends traditional advice

By Carey Smith

"I would love to sell your home, but I have to ask, do you have a place to go? Because I will make you homeless." That is the first conversation Randy Aldrich, a broker associate with The Real Estate Group, has with potential sellers.

The hot real estate market was formerly the norm only in metro areas, but with dwindling housing supply, it has now reached all parts of the country. As of this writing, only 144 homes are for sale in Sangamon County. The Springfield-area housing inventory has dropped from three to six months' worth of homes prior to the pandemic to the current one to two weeks. As such, REALTORS® are adjusting their advice for both buyers and sellers.

It is definitely a seller's market. Jami Winchester, a broker associate with The Real Estate Group, explains that when a seller puts their home on the market, they may have "12-15 showings in a day," followed by several offers. "Before, if we had an offer, we saw it right off the bat and made a decision." Now, a seller may elect to collect offers for 48 hours before making a decision.

"More than likely," says Winchester, "if you have a house that is priced right and in decent condition it's going to sell super-fast – less than a month average on market."

Jim Skeeters, a broker with Keller Williams Capital, agrees on the need to prepare sellers for a quick sale, noting there is a shortage of rentals locally as well. "This is a very serious problem that some people don't have a place to go when they sell their home."

Deciding among many offers may sound like a good problem to have, but as Aldrich notes, "If you're a seller, you have to discern between a real offer and a lot of wishful thinking."

REALTORS® recommend that buyers get pre-approved before ever starting a home search. This doesn't mean simply using an internet algorithm to determine how much home can be purchased with a certain debt-to-income ratio, but completing the formal pre-approval process with a lender.

"Be pre-approved, that's absolutely No. 1," agrees Ron Duff, managing broker at RE/MAX Professionals. Duff also recommends buyers put down "reasonably strong earnest money" to substantiate their offer. "Put down some money and let them know you intend to buy."

A lack of contingencies is another winning strategy. As Duff explains, "The fewer contingencies you put in your offer, the better



Jami Winchester, a broker with The Real Estate Group, sold this house at 900 Cypress in Chatham within 48 hours of being on the market. It has become more common to receive multiple showings and offers immediately following a new listing. PHOTO BY NORMA ZUNIGA

the chance it will be accepted." This also includes home inspections, though not all lenders will approve a mortgage without a home, termite or radon inspection.

Aldrich agrees that while a lack of contingencies may make an offer more desirable in the eyes of a seller, it is important for first-time home buyers to be aware of potential big-ticket repairs before purchasing. He recommends buyers bring someone with them when viewing a home to have "another set of eyes to make a confident choice. It might be that the only way to get an offer accepted is to forgo a home inspection, but that shouldn't be done unless you can be sure."

Another universal recommendation is to use a real estate agent. Aldrich states, "They need to work with an agent who not only can help find what's out there on the open market, but is also part of a company that has listings in the hopper coming up." With 200 agents among all of The Real Estate Group's offices, Aldrich notes while a seller is getting their house ready, "I can't disseminate their information publicly, but I can disseminate it through my office," making other agents aware of a home before it officially enters the market. This greatly increases the available inventory within a real estate company.

An agent can also recommend a lender, depending on what kind of loans buyers need to

access. Aldrich stresses every type of loan is available locally. Closing costs tend to be substantially lower when using a local lender rather than an internet service, with the added benefit that "local investors are going to take that money and reinvest it in the community," he noted.

Escalation clauses, an addendum included with an offer stating the buyer is willing to increase their offer incrementally to beat other verifiable offers, up to a capped limit, have become commonplace. Winchester states, "We're seeing an escalation clause with almost every offer."

For example, a buyer may make an offer for \$125,000 with an escalation clause stating they will pay an additional \$1,000 above any other legitimate offer with a cap of \$145,000. Aldrich states this strategy "keeps the buyer from competing against themselves, keeps them from paying thousands more than they needed to get the deal, but you'll never know if they just throw out a higher number."

Whether anticipated interest rate increases will dampen the local hot real estate market remains to be seen, but for now, both home buyers and sellers would be wise to take current market factors into account. **SBJ**

Carey Smith is thankful to own a home in the Enos Park neighborhood.



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HOME BUILDERS AND REMODELERS

Sources: The builders and remodelers.
Listed by number of full time employees.

	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE / EMAIL	#OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/PRINCIPALS	% REMODEL RENOVATION	% NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION	YEAR EST'D
1	Buraski Builders, Inc. 3757 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-5172	buraski.com buraskibuilders@yahoo.com	28	Jason Buraski Heather Sobieski	50%	50%	1981
2	Michael von Behren Builder, Inc. 3537 S. Douglas Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-8484	mvbbuilder.com aaron@mvbbuilder.com	18	Aaron Acree Jodi Acree	50%	50%	1982
3	Zinn Construction, LLC 1323 Hawthorne Chase Sherman, IL 62684	217-496-3112	zinnconstruction.com phil@zinnconstruction.com	16	Phil Zinn	50%	50%	2003
4	Bobby Shaw Building and Remodeling 2466 Glencoe Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-3973 217-306-1410	bobbyshawmaintenance.com bobby@bsmaint.com	13	Bobby Shaw	90%	10%	1987
5	Griffitts Construction Co., Inc. 1501 N. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-1431	griffitts.net griffitts@griffitts.net	15	Dennis Griffitts Gwen Griffitts Vicky Griffitts-Runyon	95%	5%	1953
6	Moughan Builders, Inc. 3140 Cockrell Lane Springfield, IL 62711	217-899-5484	moughanbuilders.com jim@moughanbuilders.com	12	James E. Moughan David P. Moughan	10%	90%	1992
6	Creasey Construction of Illinois 3450 S. Park Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-1277	creaseyconstruction.com creaseyconst@comcast.net	12	Jan Creasey Lisa Creasey	90%	10%	1983
7	DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen 3730 Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62711	217-529-9300	dreammakerspringfield.com ctrampe@dreammakerspringfield.com	11	Curt and Deb Trampe	100%	0%	1998

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Sources: The builders and remodelers.
Listed by number of full time employees.

	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE / EMAIL	#OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/PRINCIPALS	% REMODEL RENOVATION	% NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION	YEAR EST'D
8	Craig Ladage Builders, Inc. 14915 Kennedy Road Auburn, IL 62615	217-438-9206	clbuilders@royell.org	9	Craig Ladage Debbie Ladage	40%	60%	1977
9	All-C Construction, Inc. P.O. Box 9737 Springfield, IL 62791	217-787-1900	allcconstruction@att.net	6	Frank Conder Paula Conder	30%	70%	1999
10	Coady Construction Co., Inc. 143 Circle Drive Springfield, IL 62703	217-502-0602	adamcoadyconstruction.com coadyconstruction@comcast.net	5	Adam Coady	50%	50%	2006
10	D & S Builders 30 White Road Glenarm, IL 62536	217-529-6288	todd@d-sbuilders.com dan@d-sbuilders.com	5	Todd Dudley Dan Schrage	30%	70%	1995
10	Stites Development, Inc. 125 E. Main St. Rochester, IL 62563	217-498-1472	stitesdevelopmentinc.com j.stites@comcast.net	5	John H. Stites, Jr.	5%	95%	1976
10	Roth Homes 350 Williams Lane Chatham, IL 62629	217-483-6086	rothhomesinc.net	5	Terry Roth	25%	75%	1984
11	Timber Creek Home Sales, Inc. 2800 Via Rosso, Suite 1 Springfield, IL 62703	217-585-8900	timbercreekliving.com	4	Douglas Daniels	0%	100%	1999
11	Ryan Homes & Development 3149 Hedley Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-523-3976	homesanddevelopment.com ryanhomes.springfield@gmail.com	4	Mike Ryan Paula Ryan	0%	100%	1974
12	Paula Ryan Design 3149 Hedley Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-341-4501	paularyandesign.com paularyan2321@gmail.com	1	Paula Ryan	90%	n/a	2010

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Making your home a haven

By Pamela Savage

The last couple of years have found us all spending huge swaths of time in our houses. These hours and hours spent inside drove many homeowners to reconsider the aesthetics and functionality of their homes. As a result, 2020 and 2021 were record-setting years for the homebuilding and remodeling industries, both nationally and here in Illinois. As we ease into the first quarter of 2022, many of us still find ourselves at home more often than not, and area remodeling companies are still helping local homeowners turn their homes into havens.

Many home renovation patterns that popped up during the pandemic have been centered on families needing additional, or different types of, space. Shaun Shaw, operations manager of Bobby

Shaw Building & Remodeling, shared that his company has spent a lot of time on projects such as finishing basements or converting unused spaces into usable ones. For example, his company recently split a client's huge bathroom into two spaces: one a smaller bathroom and the other a home office.

Curt Trampe, president of DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen, calls these sorts of converted rooms "away spaces." Trampe says that in his mind, the "open-concept era of homes is sort of leaving." Many of DreamMaker's clients crave a new away space where a member of the household can focus on work or personal projects. In some cases, DreamMaker has been asked to install large-scale glass or barn doors that break adjoining rooms into segmented

away spaces.

One of the most important spaces for homeowners to carve out nowadays is the newly popular and necessary home office. It used to be that not everyone had a home office, or in lots of homes, a home office used to simply be a desk in a corner or a den that was one possible place to complete some light work. The pandemic changed the way we look at our home offices. Many homeowners (and their employers) want their homes to include an elaborate, highly functioning, separate workspace.

Shaw has certainly been busy building home offices and workstations, whether they be fold-up temporary ones, or permanent spaces. According to Trampe, sometimes a homeowner's regular office location is now permanently shuttered. In

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other instances, a homeowner may have an allowance from their company to help pay for a new home workspace. When this is the case, it is of paramount importance for remodeling companies to understand how to source and install the appropriate technology and tools in order to create streamlined, efficient home offices for their clients.

In addition to seeking out dedicated workspaces, homeowners are looking for stress-free leisure spaces that they can enjoy. Due to uncertainty around the safety of being indoors with friends and family, many homeowners have opted to amp up their outdoor dwellings. From everything to fire pits to custom outdoor kitchens, some homeowners have felt more comfortable spending money outdoors than in.

Shaw shared that in 2021, his company stayed busy designing and installing screened-in porches, three-season rooms and deck spaces. Trampe agreed that for many of his clients, having people “over but

out” to socialize feels more appropriate, given uncertainties about what is the safest way to gather.

In sum, Trampe observes that “one of the



biggest things that we are seeing in Illinois and nationally is that the home has become much more of a priority. People are much more willing to invest money in their homes to improve them, whether they will get the

return on the investment or not.”

With the goal of shaping sensible and pragmatic homes that are workable, Trampe has noticed some clients in their 50s and 60s considering not only how their homes function for them now, but how they will continue to serve them in the future. In this vein, many who are on the cusp of retirement are looking at their homes and coming up with practical solutions to prepare for aging in place. Remodeling options such as wider doorways, easier-to-use showers and zero-threshold entries are at the tops of these consumers’ minds.

None of us can see into the future, but it seems as though the focus on comfortable, balanced, multi-use homes is here for the time being. **SBJ**

Pamela Savage is a freelance writer in Springfield. Previously a serial renter, she and her family became homeowners about four years ago. She is considering installing a barn door.

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Hot real estate market continues into 2022

By Holly A. Whisler

"Annual home sales figures make 2021 the best year since 2006," said Lawrence Yun, chief economist for the National Association of REALTORS®, as he opened the third-annual economic and real estate summit NAR held virtually Dec. 15th, 2021. The summit reviews national trends in the previous year's real estate market and provides perspective for the coming year. This is the second consecutive year the summit has been held virtually due to the pandemic.

Although it may seem counterintuitive that homes are continuing to sell at a record pace well into the second year of a pandemic, it happens to be the case. And it follows that the summary of the 2021 NAR summit may sound like a repeat of the 2020 summit, with a few variations.

Yun remarked that overall, people realized they will need more space if they are to work from home and that favorable interest rates have allowed buyers to purchase larger homes. In addition, rising rents were becoming comparable to mortgage payments, and low interest rates made it possible for some renters to take the leap and become first-time homebuyers.

Yun stated that sales of newly constructed homes accounted for approximately 10% of the market, which may not be much, but new construction is an important part of supply. However, the number of newly built homes declined in the latter half of 2021, mostly due to zoning laws that restrict builders from accessing more land. Yun said Congress is addressing such zoning restrictions and the hope is that it will eventually ease the inventory shortage.

In addition, the disruption of the supply chain is a factor contributing to fewer new homes on the market, as some container ships that are waiting to unload hold door knobs, screen doors and other essential elements of new construction.

Summarizing other economic factors that impact residential real estate, Yun reported that consumer price inflation reached a painful high of 6.8% in 2021. That number is expected to decrease by a couple of percentage points, but that is still an uncomfortable level for Americans.

Yun added that median home prices soared to all-time highs in 2021 and some market experts predict home appreciation will continue to rise. The Federal Reserve announced it will increase interest rates three times throughout



This house in Chatham sold within hours of being listed by Randy Aldrich, a broker with The Real Estate Group. He said his buyers made an offer over the asking price with no contingencies and were willing to work with the sellers on a delayed closing date, given the current market conditions. PHOTO COURTESY RANDY ALDRICH

2022, which will slow the market some and give time for housing inventory to increase. All such factors put pressure on first-time homebuyers and those who have not accumulated enough home equity to compete in multiple-offer situations.

Panelists discussing the outlook of the residential home market agree that it remains a seller's market and that the shortage of inventory has reached a critical level. There was also agreement that inventory needs to include more entry-level homes for the first-time buyer. Identifying innovative ways of expanding inventory was a hot topic of discussion and one solution offered was manufactured homes.

Panelist Lesli Gooch, CEO of Manufactured Housing Institute, said that today's manufactured home no longer resembles that of a mobile home from decades ago. These contemporary homes have features buyers want in a new home, and they are built to meet federal standards of safety, energy efficiency and durability.

Gooch reported that LendingTree conducted an analysis on manufactured housing between 2014 and 2019, and the median value showed an appreciation increase of 40%, six points more in value than that of the site-built housing market. She claimed this shows that consumers are happy with their manufactured homes.

The Manufactured Housing Institute anticipates over 100,000 manufactured homes will be built

this year. Gooch emphasized that these homes can address both the inventory shortage and the affordability gap.

Danielle Hale, chief economist for realtor.com, acknowledged shrinking housing inventories and said the market is still competitive for buyers. On a good note, she said, "We see things shifting in a positive direction as builders have made progress increasing inventory."

And regarding affordability, Hale said, "The suburbs continue to draw a great deal of interest, especially for buyers who don't mind moving to a different metro market where their money goes farther. They can potentially buy more house for their money and builders have access to more land," which means a wider selection of inventory.

Hale specified that the 26-35 year-old demographic is where the first-time homebuyers reside. She feels young buyers are not opposed to changing jobs to live in a market that is affordable for them. She said that people move to where the housing fits their needs, especially since working from home is a reality for many.

Challenges remain for first-time homebuyers, sellers get top dollar in a strong residential market and the promise of innovation is bringing new options to the table. Let's see what 2022 has to offer. **SBJ**

Holly Whisler is a freelance writer from Springfield who previously worked in the real estate industry.

High prices and low inventory make homeownership difficult

Gaps in homeownership rates remain for Black Americans

By Troy Green

The surging residential real estate market of the last two years led to record-high home prices and record-low inventory. This simultaneous “double trouble” has made it increasingly difficult for consumers, particularly Black Americans, to achieve homeownership, according to a new analysis from the National Association of Realtors® and Realtor.com®.

“The Double Trouble of the Housing Market” report examines the impact that rapidly escalating home prices and diminishing housing inventory has on housing affordability. Unlike previous affordability research and indices, NAR and Realtor.com® considered affordability for all income groups, accounted for the affordability of homes currently available for sale instead of homes that have already sold, and provided affordability data by race for the 100 largest U.S. metro areas.

Nationally, more than 400,000 fewer affordable homes are available for sale for households earning \$75,000 to \$100,000 when compared to the start of the pandemic (245,300 in December 2021 vs. 656,200 in December 2019). For that same income group, there’s one affordable listing available for every 65 households, a significant drop in availability from one affordable listing for every 24 households in 2019.

The total home valuation across the country is estimated to have risen by \$8.1 trillion from the first quarter of 2020 through the end of 2021. However, this sizable increase in real estate values was not accompanied by a rise in homeownership as the ownership rate remained at approximately 65%.

“The housing wealth gain has been sizable over the past two years,” said NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun. “However, due to the ongoing inventory shortage and rising interest rates, homeownership attainment will become especially challenging unless drastically more housing supply is available.”

For households with higher incomes, some expensive metro areas – San Francisco, San Jose, Washington, D.C., for example – surprisingly are more affordable than before the start of the pandemic due to increasing incomes and lower mortgage rates. Since 2019, household incomes rose 15% and 13%, respectively, in San Jose and San Francisco. However, while some households in these markets can afford to buy a greater share of homes, fewer options exist as a result of the record-low inventory. For example, households earning \$100,000 to \$125,000 in the San Francisco



metro area can afford to buy 180 fewer homes now compared to December 2019. For households in San Francisco earning \$125,000 to \$150,000, there are about 300 fewer affordable homes available than in December 2019.

“In general, an increase in salary makes housing more affordable to a buyer. But due to the reductions in inventory over the last few years, today’s buyers in large tech markets can actually afford a smaller number of homes than they could two years ago, despite an uptick in wages,” said Realtor.com® chief economist Danielle Hale. “The low inventory challenge is particularly acute for some racial and ethnic groups who have faced greater hurdles to homeownership stemming from, among other things, lower incomes as a group.”

A significant and persistent racial homeownership gap exists in America. Since 2017, the annual homeownership rate for White Americans has remained comfortably above 70%; however, the homeownership rate for Blacks has been slightly above 40% – nearly 30 percentage points lower. NAR and Realtor.com® analyzed housing affordability by racial group to help explain the differences in homeownership. Nationwide, 35% of white households and only 20% of Black households have incomes greater than \$100,000. Approximately half of all homes currently listed for sale (51%) are affordable to households with at least \$100,000 income and substantial variances in affordability exist by metro area.

“Moreover, the homeownership rate has been around 50% for all households in the expensive

metro markets, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, and therefore it’s becoming nearly impossible to afford a home, especially for Black households,” Yun added. “At the same time, there are affordable markets that still provide opportunities to achieve homeownership as inventory at affordable price points is reasonably available.”

NAR and Realtor.com® also identified the top 10 most affordable housing markets for Black households. In alphabetical order, the markets are Akron, Ohio; Baltimore, Maryland; Birmingham, Alabama; Dayton, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; McAllen, Texas; Memphis, Tennessee; St. Louis, Missouri; Toledo, Ohio; and Youngstown, Ohio. In these metro areas, Black households can afford to buy homes roughly in proportion to their income distributions.

To increase the nation’s housing inventory, NAR is advocating that all levels of government include funding for affordable housing construction; preserve, expand and create tax incentives to renovate distressed properties; convert unused commercial space to residential units; and encourage and incentivize zoning reform. Moreover, expanding new-home construction by an additional 550,000 units a year for 10 years would create 2.8 million new jobs and generate more than \$400 billion in economic activity. **SBJ**

Troy Green works in communications for The National Association of Realtors®, a trade association representing more than 1.5 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.

REAL ESTATE FIRMS

Sources: The real estate agencies; Illinois Realtors website (illinoisrealtor.org). Ranked by number of licensed agents.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE/EMAIL	MANAGING PARTNER(S)/ OWNER(S)	NUMBER OF LICENSED AGENTS	YEAR EST'D
1	The Real Estate Group, Inc. 3701 W. Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62711	217-787-7000	thegroup.com info@thegroup.com	Michael J. Buscher designated managing broker 32 individual broker/owners	200	1997
2	Keller Williams Capital 3171 Robbins Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-303-8445	kw.com info@kw.com	John Kerstein designated managing broker	90	2016
3	Re/Max Professionals 2475 W. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-7215	viewspringfieldhomes.com ronduff@remax.net	Ron Duff, managing broker Jim Fulgenzi, owner	80	1986
4	Coldwell Banker Springfield 4205 W. Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62711	217-547-6655	coldwellhomes.com	Diana Foltz designated managing broker	25	2000
5	Century 21 Real Estate Associates 2030 Timberbrook Springfield, IL 62702	217-789-7200	realestateassociates.c21.com kgraham367@aol.com	Kevin Graham	15	2004
6	Campo Realty, Inc. 1213 Carroll St., rear Pawnee, IL 62558	217-625-4663	camporealty.com nick@camporealty.com	Nicholas Campo designated managing broker	10	2001
6	Craggs REALTORS, Inc. 650 N. Webster, P.O. Box 109 Taylorville, IL 62568	217-824-8131	craggsrealtors.com steve@craggsrealtors.com	Stephen B. Craggs	10	2011
7	Kennedy Real Estate LLC 400 W. Market, P.O. Box 764 Taylorville, IL 62568	217-824-8888	kennedyrealestatellc.com info@kennedyrealestatellc.com	Helen Kennedy managing broker	8	2011
8	Re/Max Results Plus 1046 W. Morton Ave. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-9613	jacksonvilleillinois-homes.com	Scott Eoff, managing broker Judy Eoff, owner	7	1996
9	Welcome Home Realty 211 N. Main St. Chatham, IL 62629	217-483-5501	welcomehomerealtyil.com welcomehomerealtymail@gmail.com	Jen Chance	6	2015
10	Curvey Real Estate, Inc. 611 Springfield Road P. O. Box 677 Taylorville, IL 62568	217-824-4996	curveyrealestate.com curvey@ctitech.com	Bernard A. Curvey, owner/broker Joe Curvey, managing broker	5	1985
11	Snelling-Chevalier Real Estate, Inc. 621 Seventh St. Pawnee, IL 62558	217-625-2411	snelling-chevalier.com gail@family-net.net	Gail Chevalier Zini managing broker	4	1986
12	Grojean Real Estate 360 W. State St. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-4151	grojeanagency.com cgrojean@grojeanagency.net	Charles Grojean	3	1947
12	Steve Hills REALTORS 900 S. Main St. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-9589	hills@jinc.net	Dianne Steinberg	3	1965
12	River Birch Realty LLC 1228 S. Seventh St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-572-1225	riverbirchrealty.managebuilding.com riverbirchrealtybr@gmail.com	Phillip Anderson, managing broker Isaac Anderson, owner	3	2020
13	Do Realty Services, Inc. 600 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-391-3636	bpo@dorealty.net	Stephanie L. Do president designated managing broker	2	2002

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Apartment complex to get overhaul

Pine Woods receives significant funding from Illinois Housing Development Authority

By Dean Olsen

Families looking for affordable housing will be the beneficiaries after state officials approved low-interest financing for \$10 million in renovations at Pine Woods Apartments in Springfield, according to Ward 7 Alderman Joe McMenamin.

"This will be really attractive to folks who have a modest income," McMenamin said after St. Louis-based Bywater Development Group received Illinois Housing Development Authority approval for the project.

Through IHDA, Bywater will receive \$18 million through the sale of federal tax-exempt bonds – a form of lower-than-market-rate borrowing – to be repaid over 19 years, according to president Aaron Burnett.

Another \$11 million will be generated for the project through IHDA's issuance of dollar-for-dollar tax credits to PNC Bank in exchange for an equity stake in the Pine Woods project for 10 years, Burnett said.

In addition to the \$10.1 million for renovations, the \$29 million raised through IHDA will finance Bywater's \$11 million purchase of the complex from a St. Louis-based investment group known as Springfield Housing Associates.

The remaining approximately \$8 million will be used for interest, consulting and legal costs, as well as for a reserve to fund future repairs and capital improvements, Burnett said.

Approval from IHDA's board on Jan. 21 represented Bywater's third attempt at financing through IHDA since 2013. Burnett and McMenamin said competition for funding through the agency has been fierce for years.

Bywater's plans call for \$10.1 million to be spent for rehab on all 168 units in the 31-year-old complex at 1665 Seven Pines Road on Springfield's west side. That works out to about \$60,000 per unit among the one-, two- and three-bedroom units in the complex's 14 three-story residential buildings. All units will receive new appliances, flooring, carpeting, countertops and kitchen cabinets, and there will be improvements to the heating and air conditioning systems.

The clubhouse and adjacent swimming pool also will be upgraded, Burnett said, who noted that the complex had been deteriorating and getting close to the end of its useful life.

"It's an ideal location, and this will ensure this is a high-quality place to live for decades to come," he said.

The work will begin in about 45 days and



Pine Woods Apartments on Seven Pines Road will undergo \$10 million in renovations, thanks to funding from the Illinois Housing Development Authority. PHOTO COURTESY OF WATER DEVELOPMENT GROUP

go on for 14 months, Burnett said, with vacant units renovated first. Tenants will be moved into the rehabbed units, then their units will be rehabbed in turn, as part of a rolling schedule over the next year.

Monthly rents for the rehabbed units will be slightly higher than the current units but still an average of 20%-25% lower than market rates, Burnett said. In addition, the installation of new windows and other energy-efficiency measures are expected to save tenants money on their electric heating and cooling bills.

After renovations are complete, a one-bedroom unit will rent for \$615 per month. A two-bedroom unit will rent for \$730 per month, and a three-bedroom unit will be \$835 per month.

People moving into the new units will have to qualify as moderate-income renters with a maximum annual household income of \$35,940 for one person, \$41,040 for two people, \$46,200 for three people, \$51,300 for four people and \$55,440 for five people.

The original complex was built for moderate-income tenants. Because current tenants qualified for their apartments just once based on their income at the time of move-in under the previous owners, some may not qualify to live in Pine Woods going forward, Burnett said.

If any tenants have to leave, Pine Woods will offer them financial assistance in moving, he said.

Many Pine Woods tenants are looking forward to the improvements, Burnett said, adding that the property management company at the site,

Sugar Creek Realty, will not change.

He said Bywater – which has developed moderately priced rental housing in Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky and South Carolina – is grateful for the support of local elected officials and organizations that wrote letters of support for the project.

Those writing letters to IHDA included McMenamin, Mayor Jim Langfelder, the Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance and the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce.

"We're really thrilled to take on this rehab," Burnett said.

"We place a very high priority on ensuring that the economic benefits of our development activities stay in the local community," he said. "We commit to and will work hard to make sure the vast majority of all subcontracting, trade work and material-supplying opportunities created by the rehabilitation of Pine Woods go to Springfield-area businesses and trades."

McMenamin said areas along Seven Pines Road, which include the Orchard Park and Westbrook complexes, make up the largest cluster of apartments in Springfield.

The city has financed improvements in sidewalks and streets in the area over the past decade, McMenamin said.

"It's really important to keep that whole area viable and strong," he said. **SBJ**

Dean Olsen is a senior staff writer for Springfield Business Journal and Illinois Times. He can be reached at dolsen@illinoistimes.com or 217-679-7810.



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Labor shortages in construction

By Cinda Ackerman Klickna

"A lack of skilled construction labor is a key limiting factor for improving housing inventory and affordability," according to a report by the Home Builders Institute, a nonprofit partner that provides career training for The National Association of Home Builders. Using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and accounting for growth in employment due to demand for construction, along with the number of people who retire or leave the construction industry permanently, the report predicted that "the required number of construction workers needed to keep up with demand is approximately 740,000 new workers per year for the next three years." Although this is a national statistic, the labor shortage pinch is being felt by many Springfield-area construction contractors.

While some contractors say they have not yet faced a problem finding workers, others say it is an ongoing problem. Some say there isn't enough push for students to go into the trades; others say new programs are helping. Overall, though, almost everyone who works in the construction field will tell you that in the future there needs to be more people interested in all aspects of construction and the trades in general.

Aaron Acree, owner and construction manager of Michael von Behren Builder, said his workers have stuck with him and he increased their pay as a result. "I know others are having problems; fewer people with experience are available."

Acree and John Stites, of Stites Development, mentioned the concern of finding workers who actually want to work. Both point to the effects of increased federal unemployment benefits and believe that the additional money paid to unemployed workers kept some people from seriously pursuing a job.

Acree said, "Sometimes there is an interested person, then an interview, and we might reach out but they never call back."

Stites agrees, "It seems no one wants to work, especially when they can make more money through unemployment. To get a worker I'd have to pay \$30 an hour, which makes it hard. In my 45 years in the business, I have never seen such a worker shortage."

Area training programs are good sources for contractors to find workers. Acree previously hired two people who attended Capital Area Career Center where there are a number of programs in construction and the trades.



Building trades students from Capital Area Career Center constructed a platform for the downtown ice skating rink operated by Sangamon CEO students last December.

Stites feels more programs are still needed. "For a long time, college was the big push; vocational programs and shop classes were cut. That led to kids not having skills in working with their hands. Sometimes, we had to train people from scratch."

Aaron Guernsey, business manager and financial secretary of Plumbers, Steamfitters & HVACR Local 137 and president of Central Illinois Building Trades Council, said, "The pool of applicants is down from 20-30 years ago when college, instead of vocational training, was pushed. Today, though, I see more trades being promoted as career options. The schools are doing a good job with career days, starting during middle school instead of waiting until a student is a junior or senior."

The construction industry includes a wide range of work: carpenters, plumbers, electricians, heating and air conditioning technicians and carpet layers, for example. Roger Huebner, executive vice president of building contractors' association Central Illinois Builders, said, "There is a renewed interest in apprenticeship programs. Each construction field has an apprenticeship program, which is a great way for people to learn a trade and get work."

What does the future hold? With an increase in infrastructure money appropriated by the

state of Illinois and the federal government, there will be many opportunities for workers in the next few years.

Guernsey said, "There are projects now coming on board – new school construction, for one. During the Rauner years we really had nothing; today the work is increasing."

Commercial construction may offer even more opportunities than home construction. Huebner explained, "The vertical construction bill from several years ago has gone through a design phase and is now coming out of design and will go out for bids. These include the (north wing of the Illinois State) Capitol, the Armory, the old Sears building at White Oaks Mall will be refurbished for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, road and bridge work, and the railroad relocation project."

New construction and home remodeling projects of all sizes will continue to supply jobs for those who want to work in some aspect of construction. With unions, schools and construction companies combining forces, more qualified workers will be ready for future construction needs. **SBJ**

Cinda Ackerman Klickna is happy to see that vocational programs are helping students find careers.

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Issues in buying or selling a home

By Sarah Delano Pavlik

For most personal transactions, people do not consult their lawyers. Instead, they rely on advice and information from other professionals such as real estate brokers, financial planners and bankers, for example. That being said, buying a home is usually the biggest purchase you will make, so it can be worth consulting your attorney. Your REALTOR® will likely use the standard REALTOR® form for our area. The REALTOR® form favors enforcement of the contract. You should be aware of the following provisions:

Inspections

The standard inspection addendum provides that the buyer may inspect the property and provide to the seller within seven calendar days following the inspection notice of any unacceptable material defects. What constitutes a "material defect" is quite limiting, however. A material defect is defined as "a condition that would have a substantial adverse effect on the value of the real property, significantly impair the health or safety of future occupants of the property, or involves a component that is not in functional or working order."

Nothing disclosed in the Residential Real Property Disclosure Report can be used as a material defect. Age cannot be used as a material defect. Per the addendum, "The fact that a functioning major component may be near or at the end of its useful life shall not render such component defective." A buyer could sign a contract and then find out through the inspection that the roof and HV/AC are on their last legs. If the roof isn't actually leaking and the HV/AC is currently running, their age would not allow the buyer to negotiate repairs or replacement.

Likewise, anything that was in compliance with

code requirements at the time of construction will not be a material defect. The inspection could reveal that an old home has original knob and tube wiring and asbestos insulation. Both can be safe, but could be a nightmare if the buyer wants to remodel.

Deadlines

There are strict deadlines that apply to the REALTOR® contract (and most contracts). Regarding the inspection addendum, the buyer must notify the seller within seven days of the inspection of any unacceptable material defects. If the buyer misses the seven-day deadline, the contract remains in force. The seller must deliver a written response to the buyer within seven days of receiving the notification. If the seller misses the response deadline, the seller must make all repairs requested by the buyer and the contract remains in force. If the seller responds in a timely manner that he or she will not agree to the repairs, the parties have five days to negotiate an agreement. During the negotiations, if a party takes more than two days to respond to an offer, the offer is deemed accepted. If no agreement is reached, the buyer must inform the seller within two days that he or she is declaring the contract void. If the buyer misses the deadline, the contract remains in force. There are similar deadlines with respect to an appraisal, financing and title issues.

Damages

If either party breaches the contract, the other party's damages are not limited to the amount of the earnest money. For example, if the seller breaches the contract, the buyer can sue for "specific performance," i.e., making the seller

go through with the sale. If the buyer breaches the contract and the seller loses money due to delay or if the seller later sells the property for less than the price the buyer agreed to pay, the seller can sue for those amounts. In addition, the REALTOR® contract provides that whichever party prevails in the litigation is entitled to costs of the litigation and attorneys' fees. Most often, if the buyer breaches the contract, the seller will retain the earnest money and declare the contract void, however, the seller is not obligated to do so.

So, what can you do about these contract provisions? You are free to change any of them. If you are the buyer, you can make an offer with a contract other than the REALTOR® form or you can use addenda to the REALTOR® contract. You could include an attorney review period. A provision in the standard Chicago-area form has a five-day attorney review period. After the contract is signed, each party's attorney has five days to propose revisions, on anything other than price. If an agreement cannot be reached, either party can walk away. A buyer could also use an addendum that provides he or she can walk away for any reason after an inspection. In today's seller's market, a seller might not accept the addendum, in which case the buyer needs to decide to walk away or take the risk that the inspection will reveal non-material but expensive defects.

If you are looking to buy or sell, talk to your attorney. Don't wait until you have signed the contract to show it to him or her. It may be too late. **SBJ**

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Real estate professionals invest in community causes

By Janet Seitz

"The Real Estate Group has always relied on individual agents to support the organizations of their choice," said Mike Buscher, designated managing broker with The Real Estate Group. "It is a challenge to choose one great organization over another great organization. ... We tried to come up with a fair and equitable way for many organizations of the agents' choice to have a chance to receive the donations."

The solution was to hold a drawing at company events. Everybody has an opportunity to donate in \$20 increments, Buscher explained, and fill out a form noting a charity of choice. "If I donate \$100, my charity has five chances of winning. Depending on the amount collected, we will draw one or two organizations."

Recipients of these drawings include Ronald McDonald House, Central Illinois Food Bank and the Elizabeth Ann Seton Program, totaling about \$10,000 in all. Members of The Real Estate Group also support the Capital Area REALTORS® annual Charity of Choice.

"We are supported by the community for our business. It is vital that we support and give back to help support the community," said Buscher. "The majority of the community support is done by individual agents to the nonprofits they support. There is no way I can even begin to calculate the amount of money and support given each year. It is significant."

As an example, he said one of the group's agents, Jane Locascio, reached out internally to the group after Kentucky tornadoes and asked for donations. She and her husband, Phil, matched the donations and sent a total of \$5,000 to help the victims.

Another Real Estate Group member, Julie Davis, said she has supported housing initiatives, charitable organizations, the arts and medical endeavors. "Giving back was ingrained in me as a child. ... It was a responsibility, you had to be a good citizen."

When she was the owner of Julie Davis Inc. Realtors, one of the largest real estate companies in the area at the time, the firm gave 8% of its net profit every year to some charity or philanthropic endeavor. "I thought that was just what everybody did," Davis said. She also looked for opportunities for herself and her agents to volunteer, along with a financial commitment. "When you get people involved, you help foster the philosophy of giving, which can be more valuable over time than any single financial gift,"



Ron and Suzie Duff both serve on the board of directors for Refuge Ranch, a horse ranch in Rochester that ministers to at-risk youth. PHOTO COURTESY OF REFUGE RANCH

she noted.

Now as a broker with The Real Estate Group, she said as a private individual she doesn't have as much to give as her past business. But she and her husband, Tom Frost, follow the same philosophy of giving 8%, and as often as possible, give time as well as money.

"When the community does well, we all do well," she said. "If the citizens of Springfield take care of the charitable organizations, then our community is a better place to live. It makes it better for business, schools, housing and our lifestyle in general."

Ron Duff and his wife, Suzie, both real estate agents with RE/MAX Professionals, are active in a number of charities for similar reasons. They both serve on the board of Refuge Ranch, a horse ranch ministering to at-risk youth.

"The ranch works with them one-on-one with a mentor to build a trusting relationship," Duff explained. "We instill a work ethic by teaching them how to care for the ranch. ... Although it's an equine program, the kids can participate in canoeing, fishing and other ranch fun. The goal is to teach them they have value and worth in spite of their circumstance. ... Watching hurting kids learn to trust – and eventually ride – their horse, or better yet, prep and saddle their horse on their own – those are memorable moments," he said.

Duff said his wife is a third-generation supporter of King's Daughters Organization, a group with a legacy of serving the elderly in Sangamon County. She shops, serves meals and makes sure seniors have companionship from time to time, especially during the holidays. Together, the Duffs support Refuge Ranch, King's Daughters Organization and First Step Women's Center, both financially and through volunteer work. Additionally, the couple donates a portion of their earned commissions to Children's Miracle Network at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital. RE/MAX as a franchise is an annual corporate sponsor of Children's Miracle Network.

Duff knows involvement makes a difference. "Our youngest and eldest citizens have a great need because they are most vulnerable. In either case, young or old, the difference is in the person we serve. Love for the young and a hug for the elderly give the volunteers so much joy."

He said, "Suzie and I know the core service of organizations is important work. ... I think there are many people in the sales profession that give a lot to their community." **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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Steve Myers

Springfield Clinic renovates fourth floor of Pavilion

Springfield Clinic has completed a renovation of the fourth floor of the HSHS St. John's Pavilion at 301 N. Eighth Street in Springfield, bringing multiple service lines into one location. Patients will be able to see Springfield Clinic providers in urology and orthopedics, and the renovated area includes space to perform certain urology procedures so patients don't have to visit another location.

Springfield Clinic patients can also access lab and radiology services on this floor, with

radiation oncology and optometry services coming soon. Members of Springfield Clinic's trauma surgery and general surgery teams have also relocated from the third to the fourth floor.

Construction work at the pavilion began in March 2021. The project architect was Bernes Shober and O'Shea Builders served as the general contractor.

The Pavilion has a separate entrance just east of St. John's Hospital with complimentary valet parking available.



The newly renovated fourth floor of HSHS St. John's Pavilion is home to Springfield Clinic providers in urology and orthopedics.

PHOTO COURTESY SPRINGFIELD CLINIC

Pritzker touts initiatives aimed at expanding health care workforce

By Grace Kinnicutt, Capitol News Illinois

As Gov. JB Pritzker continues to promote his budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year, he outlined his plan for rebuilding the state's health care workforce during a stop Feb. 15 at a Peoria community college.

He joined local leaders at Illinois Central College to talk about the Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare Workforce program, a proposed initiative modeled after an existing statewide grant program, the Workforce Equity Initiative.

The PATH program would run through the state's community college system, providing financial assistance to students enrolling in courses to obtain certificates in high-need health care areas. The targeted programs include nursing and certified nursing assistant positions, respiratory therapists and emergency medical technicians.

Assistance would also be available to address other barriers such as transportation, child care, food vouchers and tutoring.

Pritzker has asked lawmakers to invest \$25 million in the program in the upcoming fiscal year.

"We are creating opportunities in underserved communities for Illinois residents to build great careers," Pritzker said.

Pritzker also proposed a \$2 million increase in funding to the state's nursing education scholarship program which is aimed at retaining and recruiting nursing

professionals. The governor also proposed eliminating licensing fees that will save health care workers about \$21 million.

His budget also proposes doubling funding for a Nurse Educator Fellowship program and a Competitive Grants for Nursing Schools program aimed at increasing the number of nursing school graduates.

Pritzker touted the Workforce Equity Initiative program, which launched in 2019 with the backing of Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, D-Peoria. That initiative offers 120 training programs through 18 colleges across the state to increase workforce skills and expand training opportunities for minority students. Funds can be used for tuition, child care, transportation and educational supplies, and the program receives about \$18.7 million annually.

Gordon-Booth said the data from the WEI program are "the best in the country" and that the program serves as a "blueprint" for the national education system.

As of Dec. 31, 2021, the collective outcomes of the FY20 and FY21 grants showed that 5,221 students had enrolled in WEI, with 3,885 being African American students.

Danielle Pate, a graduate of the WEI program at ICC, said she was going to attend another college but was recruited to join the WEI program at the school. Pate said the

program helped fund her college along with providing stipends, tutoring and any other help she might have needed.

"It was definitely a blessing to focus mainly on school and receive any assistance I needed at the time," Pate said.

Pritzker said he had three goals for higher education programs, including increasing Monetary Award Program grants, working toward making Illinois a top five state in receiving more federal funding for student assistance and increasing state support directly for higher education institutions.

In the FY 2023 proposed budget, Pritzker proposed \$122 million increase for MAP grants, bringing the program's total funding over \$600 million. He also proposed a \$2.5 million increase to Adult Education and Career and Technical programs for community colleges, and \$2.3 million for a Minority Teacher Scholarships program.

"We're finally making it more affordable for students to get their degrees in Illinois, and our future is bright as a result," Pritzker said.

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Build a great place to work

Understanding the four forces of employee engagement

By Kelly Gust

Congratulations to all of this year's Best Places to Work winners! It's great to see organizations with such pride among owners and employees alike. When the team is strong and the culture is one where people can thrive, it's exciting, almost magical. People know their roles. They communicate. They develop trust with each other. These teams are laser-focused on their goals, because they don't experience the friction of interpersonal conflict slowing them down. Work becomes inspiring, even joyful. These themes are evident as you peruse the pages of this issue and read about the Best Places to Work winners.

For some organizations, creating a great culture happens naturally. For others, especially as the business grows, it requires intention and a focus on human behavior. According to the Predictive Index, a talent optimization platform that uses people-data to understand work behavior, employee engagement is driven by four forces: job fit, manager fit, team fit and cultural fit.

Hiring for job fit requires an understanding of the work to be done. Consider whether the job is a process job (do one thing right, over and over) or a project job (figure it out, implement and then move on). Does the job require heads-down analytical work, or is it focused on persuading and pleasing people? Is there structure or flexibility? Strong job fit occurs when a person is hired into a role that matches their natural strengths. These employees tend to

be productive, happy team members who stick around.

Job fit is amplified when the employee has a great boss. Armed with the knowledge that the employee was likely hired to do a different job than the manager, understanding and appreciating differences in work style, communication and behavior is easier. As a big-picture, captain-style leader, I know I have had to learn to adjust to and appreciate my detail-oriented and procedure-driven team members. They value that I'm willing to forge into uncharted territory, and I appreciate that they add structure to my ideas. Too many employees are promoted to management without being developed for the people skills, self-awareness and values that it takes to become a "great place to work"-type of boss.

Team fit is the third engagement force to consider. Unfortunately, where there are teams, there is the potential for disagreement about priorities, goals, ideas and values. At best, this creates friction that slows down productivity; at worst, good employees leave. Great places to work foster positive team relationships by creating a shared goal for the team. People who are all rowing the boat in the same direction, and who understand one another's strengths, are less likely to experience conflict. Feeling valued and respected on a team is critical and represents the difference between healthy debate and dysfunctional conflict. Great places to work develop a shared

vocabulary for team values and talk about them often.

Finally, there's culture, which is both the most salient and yet the most fleeting. The term "culture fit" refers to how each employee aligns with the values, mission and style of the organization. While it's rewarding when an employee feels they belong to a team, it's absolutely electric when they can say, "I belong to this organization; I make a difference here." Great organizations communicate their purpose and mission, then act upon it consistently. They help employees see how their job, on their team, with the support of their boss, makes a difference. It doesn't matter if you have 1,500 employees or 15; a strong culture is the driving force that helps teams, managers and individuals gel to become a great place to work.

If your organization naturally experiences the frictionless work and even joy that arises when jobs, managers, teams and culture are aligned, keep it up! And if you aspire to reach "best places" status in the future, take the time to assess your culture. Then shape it by hiring, managing and developing teams with intention. It feels like magic, but it's powered by human behavior. **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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Storytelling? Not as Easy as it Seems.

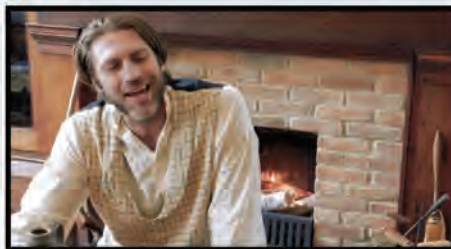
Dennis Thread

"Storytelling" is the buzzword of the era, the "magical elixir" for communication, selling everything from cryptocurrency to political change. It sounds so simple. But like much jargon, its simplicity can be misleading. Telling stories can be complicated.

Bill Furry of the Illinois State Historical Society – historian, musician, polymath of Springfield – had a challenge. "No one had heard of John Hancock, the mysterious broken-hearted Bard of the Sangamon who arrived in Springfield from England in 1830," Furry relates.

"Hancock wrote poems of lost love, the mystic land of King Arthur, and the mundane aspects of frontier life: fierce winters, bare-knuckled local politics, boon-town schemes gone bust."

"He's a totally unknown part of our shared past. As a gift to all for the bicentennial of Sangamon County, we decided to make a film about Hancock."



Creating a long-form documentary or narrative film is daunting. As the producer and director, Furry knew he needed help to bring this fascinating story to life.

"Brian Crowdsen and his team were the perfect partners." A bit mischievously he added, "I can even spell it out. They were Professional, Economical, Responsive, Focused, Enthusiastic, Creative, and Technology savvy.

PERFECT. They went on the journey with us, making the project their own, keeping costs down, adapting rapidly to changing schedules, solving

"problems, and grasping opportunities on the fly.

"At the climactic moment, with our poet gazing dreamily into a fireplace, they even created virtual fire out of thin air. It was astonishing."

Telling stories on video requires experience, technical expertise, and creativity – and is a must for every organization. Nationwide, nearly 90% of businesses use video in marketing (according to wyzowl.com), and nearly as many report a positive ROI. With the rise of "video everywhere," you need a seasoned, experienced, professional creative partner. Bill Furry found one in Crowdsen Creative. You can too.



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Mid-West Family Springfield

Laguna Brava

Mexican Restaurant



By Thomas C. Pavlik

Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant opened up just a few months ago in the former Los Agaves space in Sherwood Plaza on Wabash Avenue. It's a family-run operation with great service and authentic dishes, including homemade tortillas. There's lots to like here.

Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant did a substantial remodel to the space. It's still cavernous and the walls could use some decorations, but everything's been painted, new flooring was installed and a slew of new seating was brought in. We liked the changes.

One of the few things I didn't like was that they don't yet have their liquor license. Although we visited on a business day for lunch, any other time I generally like to wash down my meal with a margarita or ice-cold Tecate. Not to worry though, as they hope to have their license soon.

My guests and I arrived early in the lunch hour on a brutally cold day. Although guests came and went the entire time we were there, I suspect that the weather probably resulted in a fairly slow day.

Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant's menu is quite expansive. The separate lunch menu is available from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. Dishes are all reasonably priced (especially the lunch fajitas at \$10.75 – good value for the portion) and pretty much everyone will find something to their liking. The Huevos Al Gusto (\$8.99 – two eggs done your way, chorizo, salsa ranchera and rice and beans) as well as the Camarones al Mojo (\$10.50 – garlic-marinated shrimp with rice and beans) stood out. We decided, however, to order off the dinner menu.

We started with the queso (\$3.25) and some salsa and chips. The queso was perhaps the best I've had in Springfield. Although it wasn't overly spicy, the peppers stood out and gave it a nice pop. The chips were house-made and the regular salsa had a nice consistency (not too runny) and tasted freshly made. It was easy on the spice. Not so with the hot salsa we asked for. That had some zing and managed to hit all the right flavor notes. It might be too hot for some, but my guest and I had the hot bowl refilled a few times. Nicely done, Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant.

For entrees, we opted for the Los Tres Cenotes fajitas (\$15.99) and the Carnitas Gomez (\$13.75). These were hard decisions, as the menu is big and there are some other tempting dishes like the Molcajete (\$17.50 – chicken, steak, shrimp, chorizo, peppers, onions, jalapeño and queso fresco, all served in a volcanic-like bowl with rice and beans) and the Aguachile (\$14.75 – shrimp served in a liquid seasoned with lime, cilantro, cucumbers, onions and chilis). I'd never heard of Aguachile, but I do know that it will make



(Top) Aguachile (Bottom) Mojarra
PHOTOS COURTESY FACEBOOK

an appearance at the table the next time I visit Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant.

I tend to judge a Mexican restaurant by its carnitas, which literally interpreted means "little meats." It's made by simmering pork bits in liquid (traditionally lard), which can take four hours or more. The result is tender and juicy meat that's packed with flavor and eaten with tortillas and the usual fajita accompaniments. Although Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant has traditional carnitas, the Carnitas Gomez come with a wonderfully delicious and tangy tomatillo sauce. Yes, the meat was cooked perfectly. But that tomatillo sauce took the dish to the next level. Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant passed the test.

As to the tortillas, my guest and I both ordered flour. They were spot on and homemade, which made me regret not ordering corn. Few things are better than corn tortillas made on-site from lumps of masa with loving hands. Next time.

The fajitas Los Tres Cenotes came with chicken, steak and shrimp. It was a very large dish and presented good value. The pico de gallo that came with it looked anemic, thanks to the pale tomatoes and lack of cilantro, but I guess that's



to be expected at this time of the year. And, in any event, the delicious salsas more than made up for this miss. My guest, a fajita aficionado, declared himself pleased and mentioned that he planned to come back as well.

Service was excellent across the board, I suspect primarily because all staff looked to be family members and had some skin in the proverbial game.

Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant is a most welcome addition to the Springfield dining scene with some fun twists and other authentic dishes. Job well done, Laguna Brava Mexican Restaurant. **SBJ**

Address: 2466 Wabash Ave., Springfield
Hours: Monday-Thursday 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., and Sunday 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

Calendar

MARCH 2022



The Network Group

Second Tuesday of each month, 11:45 a.m. Sangamo Club, 227 E. Adams St. 217-652-3686.

Capital City Toastmasters

Wednesdays, 12 p.m. Temporarily meeting via Zoom. Email or call for information. admin-1313356@toastmastersclubs.org. 217-698-8767.

Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois (WE-CI)

Second Wednesday of each month. Meeting location varies. Email or call for more information. christine@baileyfamilyinfurnace.com. 217-441-2342.

McBrian Lincoln-Douglas Toastmasters Club

Thursdays, 6 p.m. The club is dedicated to the development of communication and leadership skills. Red School Mall, 1275 Wabash Ave. 217-546-8624.

The Association of Women in Communications

Second Thursday of each month. An organization for empowering women with the strength, support and tools for elevating their careers and becoming agents of change in the industry. Email for meeting place and time. president@awcspringfield.org.

League of Our Own Toastmasters Club

Second and fourth Friday of each month, 11:30 a.m. Support in developing communication and leadership skills in both personal and professional lives. Temporarily meeting via Zoom. Call 217-789-0830 ext.1301 or

send an email to springfieldtoastmasters@gmail.com if you would like to visit an online meeting.

Illinois Cannabis Law Changes Coming! What Employers Need to Know

Tue., March 1, 10:30am-12pm. More changes appear to be coming to Illinois concerning cannabis/THC and specifically how employers manage drug testing beginning in the pre-employment stage and continuing throughout the employment relationship. The State is looking at ways to better protect job applicants and workers who lawfully use marijuana outside of work. \$145-\$175. Webinar. ilchamber.org. 217-522-5512.

A Prescription for Equity - Dismantling Systemic Racism in Health Care in Illinois

Thu., March 3, 6:30-7:30pm. Panel discussion of HB 158, the comprehensive reform bill signed into law in 2021 to create a more equitable and inclusive health care system in Illinois. Panelists include Sen. Mattie Hunter, Rep. Camille Lilly, Sen. Doris Turner and Valeria Cueto, vice president of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Memorial Health. This public policy program of the American Association of University Women Springfield, Illinois branch is free and open to the public. Via Zoom. Visit the Facebook page for registration information.

Leadership Training for Illinois Supervisors and Managers

Thu., March 3, 9am-4pm. Every year, the State of Illinois makes changes to legislation that transforms the employment landscape. Supervisors and managers need to know how to navigate particular topics to remain in compliance with the new laws. This semi-

nar will present that direction. Supervisors will receive the necessary information using the 2022 Supervisor's Handbook as a guide and provide a necessary update for 2022. \$349-\$399. Illinois Chamber of Commerce, 215 E. Adams St., 217-522-5512.

Good Morning, Springfield

Tue., March 8, 7:30-8:45 a.m. Good Morning, Springfield provides a casual atmosphere at a member-host business that is conducive to making connections that matter. Continental breakfast available. \$5 Chamber members and \$15 nonmembers. i3 Broadband, 3001 W. White Oaks Drive. 217-331-0043.

WECI Women's Business Showcase

Wed., March 9, 4:30-7pm. Celebrating women owned/operated businesses. Mingle with women making their way in the business world. Connect, build new relationships, learn and register to win prizes. Over 60 women-owned businesses. Free appetizers, cash bar. Visit the website to register to attend. wecispringfield.org. Free. Erin's Pavilion, Southwind Park, 4965 S. Second St., 217-628-3441.

Business After Hours

Thu., March 24, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Business After Hours is the Chamber's monthly evening mixer. A Chamber member hosts the event at their facility and provides a casual atmosphere conducive for networking with other members. Grab your business cards and connect with other area professionals and gain exposure for your business. Members \$5 and nonmembers \$15. Agility Communications and Technology Services Company, 1209 S. Fourth St. 217-391-9290

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New businesses

Sangamon County new business registrations, Jan.16 - Feb. 15, 2022

BRH Lawn Services, 2630 Delaware Drive. 502-6172. Bridgett R. Henderson.

Brilliant Bouquets, 3301 Ellendale Drive. 413-5837. Jessica Wilson.

Haven Interiors, 5930 North Lake Road. 622-9390. Jaclynn Elizabeth Phillips.

Mushroom Farmacy, 734 Bonanza Pass. 299-4578. August Jones.

Iconic Photos by Ashley, 2423 Denver Drive. 416-5322. Ashley Earnest.

James D. Landscaping, 1804 South 2nd Street. 441-3865. James Dale Alexander Sr.

Refiner's Recovery, 1609 Lowell Ave. 361-4610. Thy Kingdom Come.

Newman Wealth Consultation, 109 Whitefield Road. 415-8316. Mark A. Newman.

Full Blast Bin Washing, 2240 Wilbur. 361-6992. Matthew Johnson.

Spotless Perfection Window Cleaning, 413 N. Rose Drive, Auburn. 415-8491. Tristan Oitker.

Taste of Queens Kitchen, 927 N. Third St. 309-501-1344. Natalie Hunter.

Levee Trucking, 13765 Fishburn Road, Mechanicsburg. 306-6451. James Christopher Norvell.

Rabbit Jewelry Co., 212 Norwalk Road. 630-207-4905. Peter Marek.

Helms Deep Investment Club, 2310 Montclair Drive. 720-4458. Dennis C. Smith, Joseph E. Sculley, Nicolas H. Rowe.

Lashes by Gabrielle Rose, 2515 St. James Road. 836-48434. Gabrielle Rose Helmerichs.

England Lawn Care, 3308 Blueberry Lane. 899-6386. Donald Bryan England.

Kyn & Ken Boutique, 1405 N. Grand Ave. West, Apt. 8. 553-6285. Evelyn Byrd.

6 Sisters Cleaning, 3025 S. Second St. 553-5824. Qunda Price.

Brenda's Wreaths and Crafts, 1009 Lori Lane, Apt. D. 836-6895. Brenda Kay Letcher.

Rhythmiq Solutions, 2965 Carriage Lane. 502-2909. Richard J. Franck.

Springfield Photo Booth Rental, 925 Clocktower Drive, Suite C. 899-6905. Events Eleven, LLC.

Lil Drops of Joy, 2512 Greenbriar Road. 553-5208. Kimberly A. Martin.

Thrive Lawn Care, 207 W. Jefferson St., Auburn. 319-9463. David Wayne Gentle II.

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Sangamon County new business registrations, Jan.16 - Feb. 15, 2022

Naturally Vicious Nails, 2722 S Lowell Ave. 516-6939. Vallery Narris.

D Happy Nails & Spa, LLC, 3219 W. Iles Ave. 787-6699. Phung Phan.

Glenn Thomas Tech, 5152 Old Chatham Road. 720-2838. Glenn Thomas McCrea.

KIND Consulting, 1700 South Park Ave. 741-1643, KIND Consulting, LLC.

Swept Away, 1244 N. Daniel Ave. 299-5841. Tammy Jackson.

Briarcreek Communication, 1602 Briarcreek Lane. 679-5460. Mark Schmidt.

R. Zane Construction Solutions, 291 S. Sherman Blvd., Sherman. 670-5641. Sean Dunkel.

Debonair Dog Pet Spa, 3036 N. Peoria Road. 361-5733. Michelle M. Michael.

K.O.S. Inspired Crafts & Clothing, 1645 W. Monroe St. 299-6089. Winda K. Shephard.

Colvin Design, 3617 North Grand Ave. East, Lot 42. 871-8473. Hope Ann Colvin.

PRN Properties, 1801 Duncan Ave., Swansea. 618-531-0851. Cassey A. Green.

PRS Properties, LLC, 65 Castings Road. 618-531-0851. Cassey A. Green.

Jake's Thrift & Resell, 800 Diane Court. 415-0801. Jacob Cole Garde.

Yellow Dog Kennels and Daycare, 12609 State Route 125, Pleasant Plains. 415-9101. Jennifer L. Pankey, Todd Pankey.

Stackin' Bricks, 27 Hollyhock, Riverton. 816-7130. Vincent Romanotto IV.

Le Spaw Mobile, 1125 Juniper Place, Chatham. 361-8086. Taylor Ann Newberry.

Pawsh, 33 Locksley Lane. 971-9177. Kelli M. Bunch.

Clay Design Co., 4416 Clearwater Lane. 685-1055. Rebecca Metzger.

HCB Transportation, LLC, 2700 Carl Prairie Drive. 220-3928. Bardel C. Byrd.

Sara Warren Photography, 2801 Rutherford Trek. 414-3316. Sara Warren.

BOS Insurance Agency, 2600 Stevenson Drive. 529-5555. Bank of Springfield.

Capitol Area Young Republications, 1132 E. Sangamon Ave. 528-6267. Aakashdeep Raut.

Lux Auto Detail, 1801 Cogmill. 891-1798. Timothy e. Dunn.



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