



E.L. Pruitt Co. is a leading provider of HVAC systems, plumbing and piping for commercial, industrial, institutional and service/maintenance clients.

Mechanical Contractors

Serving This Area With Pride for 50+ Years



Academy Sports (Springfield)



Dana Thomas House (Springfield)



Illinois National Bank (Springfield



ISU Mennonite School of Nursing (Spfld





Malibu Jack's (Springfield)





Lincoln Home Visitor Center (Spfld



St. John's Hospital (Springfield)



Broadgauge (Petersburg)



Medics First (Springfield)





Fairview Elementary (Springfield)



The Hub Transportation Center (Spflo



Rivian (Normal)



COMMERCIAL O INDUSTRIAL O INSTITUTIONAL

Phone: (217) 789-0966 Fax: (217) 789-2694 3090 Colt Road PO Box 3306 Springfield, IL 62708

Phone: (217) 422-9590 Fax: (217) 422-9565 121 South Webster Decatur, IL 62563



Green Hyundai (Springfield)

E.L. Pruitt Co. is a design firm specializing in Design-Build and negotiated projects, including sealed drawings.

www.elpruitt.com

IL Plumbing License #058-147422

Have a *PLAN* so you can enjoy *LIFE!*



Experienced - Comprehensive - Responsible WEALTH MANAGEMENT

James D. Copper, CLU, CFP
Ryan J. Ehmen, CPA, PFS
Melanie K. Lesko
Noah D. Skinner

217.753.4020 www.scewealth.com 3000 Professional Dr. Springfield

*Registered Investment Advisory Firm

In this issue:

SBJ articles



Q&A with Rev. Silas JohnsonBy David Blanchette



Residential real estate trendsBy Pamela Savage



City of Springfield penalized for violating Fair Housing Act By Dean Olsen

18 Home Builders and Remodelers List • 22 Real Estate Firms List • 28 Appraisers List



Cover story
Best Places to Work

Columns

34 Ask an attorney

By Sarah Delano Pavlik

40 Professional development

By Kristina Barbee

38 Medical news

46 Restaurant review

By Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.

36 Philanthropy *By Janet Seitz*

48 New businesses

Sometimes you are the solution

Due to my ongoing volunteer work in the Enos Park area, I am often asked to give advice to other neighborhood associations that are struggling to gain momentum. There are certainly strategies I can share for engaging neighbors and working with city officials, but unfortunately, there are no shortcuts to success. The Enos Park Neighborhood Improvement Association was founded in 1989, which means we've been at it for 35 years now.

It's easy to complain, "Somebody should do something about that," whether the problem in question is garbage, boarded houses or other types of nuisance issues that are prevalent in Springfield's older neighborhoods. But sometimes the best solution, at least in the short term, is to do something ourselves.

Should the city have a better system for picking up garbage and tracking who doesn't have service? Absolutely, and it's important to continue to lobby for systemic changes. But in the meantime, picking up litter every time you walk your dog or getting a group of residents together to clean up a vacant lot or alley is a good start. Moving Pillsbury Forward has taken it a step further and enlisted volunteers with chainsaws and loppers to tackle overgrown vacant lots, in addition to cleaning up trash.

Downtown Springfield is a good example of an area that has been revitalized largely due to the efforts of individual entrepreneurs who have taken on a building or two at a time, rather than large-scale developers. Converting vacant office space – which has experienced a significant reduction in demand – to help meet the growing need for additional residential units is the next challenge to tackle (p. 30).

This month's Q&A with the Rev. Silas Johnson (p. 6) is a prime example of how a few committed people can transform an area. Tired of seeing his church surrounded by run-down houses and drug dealers, Johnson decided to build a day care across the street, then new houses. Fifteen years and 120 houses later, the Nehemiah Project has helped transform the landscape of the east side, along with the lives of many residents who now have the opportunity to become homeowners.

The visionaries behind Moving Pillsbury Forward, Nehemiah Project and other successful endeavors did not start out with extensive real estate experience and fat bank accounts. They simply saw a need and tried to address it, recruiting others to help them along the way. That's how change takes place, little by little.



Michelle Ownbey, publisher



Editor: Fletcher Farrar

fletcher@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Publisher: Michelle Ownbey

michelle@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Associate Publisher: James Bengfort jbengfort@illinoistimes.com

Copy Editor: Daron Walker

daron@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

Production Design: Devin Larson dlarson@illinoistimes.com

Advertising:

Yolanda Bell yolanda@springfieldbusinessjournal.com 217-679-7802

Beth Parkes-Irwin beth@springfieldbusinessjournal.com 217-679-7803

Ron Young ron@springfieldbusinessjournal.com 217-679-7807

Subscriptions:

springfieldbusinessjournal.com/subscribe subs@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

March Contributors:

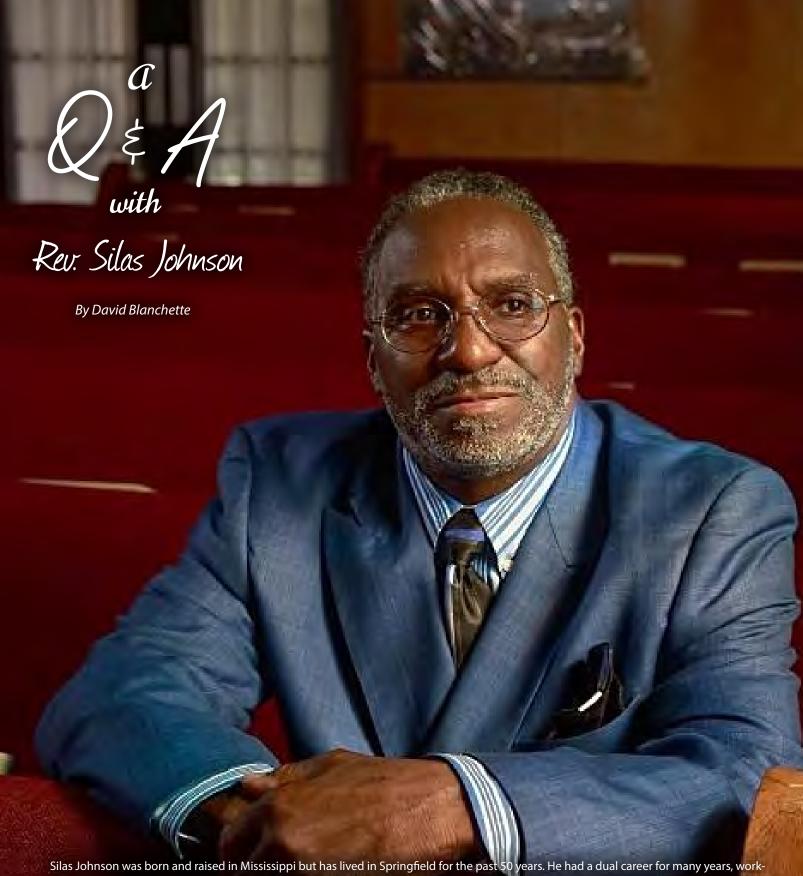
David Blanchette
Josh Catalano
Kelly Gust
Catherine O'Conner
Dean Olsen
Thomas C. Pavlik
Sarah Delano Pavlik
Janet Seitz
Pamela Savage
Holly Whisler
Eric Woods

Address: P.O. Box 398, Springfield, IL 62705

Phone: 217-726-6600

Email: info@springfieldbusinessjournal.com **Facebook:** facebook.com/SBJillinois **Twitter:** twitter.com/sbjmonthly

SPRINGFIELD BUSINESS JOURNAL is published monthly by Central Illinois Communications, P.O. Box 5256, Springfield, IL 62705. The contents of SPRINGFIELD BUSINESS JOURNAL are copyrighted, and material contained herein may not be copied or reproduced without permission of the publisher. Opinions expressed in SPRINGFIELD BUSINESS JOURNAL are those of their authors, and no information or opinions expressed in SPRINGFIELD BUSINESS JOURNAL are present an endorsement or solicitation for purchase or sale by SPRINGFIELD BUSINESS JOURNAL or its staff.



Silas Johnson was born and raised in Mississippi but has lived in Springfield for the past 50 years. He had a dual career for many years, working as a journeyman electrician in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 193 while also pastoring Community Baptist Church for a decade and then Calvary Baptist Church for the past 40 years. In 2010, Johnson retired from his electrical career with CWLP and now devotes himself fully to his pastoral duties and his Nehemiah Project ministries.

Through Nehemiah Project, Johnson has overseen the construction of 120 new houses on the east side of Springfield and also launched a day care center that continues to operate.

He has been active throughout the years in many community organizations, including the Springfield Ministerial Alliance, the Springfield NAACP and the Faith Coalition for the Common Good.

Johnson and his wife, Loretta, have three sons: Isaiah, Samuel and Silas.

Where were you born and raised, and what was life like for you growing up?

I was born and raised in Macon, Mississippi. We grew up poor, but we really didn't know we were classified as poor. We had enough food and we were happy; my mom and dad provided everything we needed. I am the 13th of 15 children.

How did you end up coming to Springfield?

There was not a lot of work for individuals in Macon at that time, and my mother told me, "Son, there's not a lot here for you, so you need to leave." I graduated from high school on June 1, 1973, and my mother handed me a ticket to Springfield, Illinois, so I could join my brother James, who lived there. I wasn't crazy about Springfield, but I came. And I've been here ever since.

When did you decide to go into the ministry?

I knew that God was calling me into the ministry. My dad was a pastor long before I was born. About a year after I got to Springfield, I accepted the call to the ministry at Community Baptist Church. I served there for about 10 years and then Calvary Baptist Church called me. This will be my 40th year at Calvary.

How did the idea begin for Nehemiah?

When I was called to Calvary, the church was in a place surrounded by run-down houses, drug dealers were all around. The church started buying property because we didn't want that sort of activity around us. I met Tom Brookshire, who was the director of Easter Seals at the time, and he told me the property we had bought across the street

from the church would be a good location for a day care.

We went to five different banks trying to get financing for that day care. Finally, a bank loaned us the gap funding, the city put in \$300,000, and we had other money and the land. That's where Nehemiah Child Care came from.

When did Nehemiah transition into housing development?

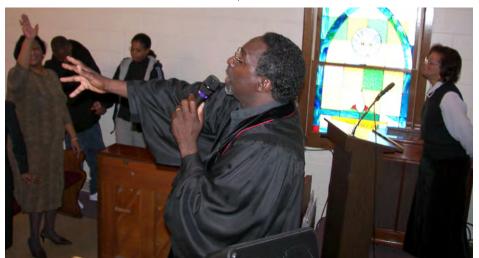
The bank asked me how we planned to maintain and support the day care. So I said, "Well, we are going to build houses." At first, we tried to do it one house at a time, but every person we sent to the bank had a reason why they could not get qualified to buy one of our homes. I was getting discouraged.

Somebody on the Nehemiah board knew Mike Niehaus, a local developer, so I met him really early one morning at Bob Evans for breakfast, and from that conversation we decided to build a bunch of houses at one time. That allowed us to get federal tax credits, and the tax credits brought some more investment.

We built 20 houses the first time, but still it was not enough to change the face of Springfield's east side. So the church bought as many properties around us as we could, built houses, and put the proceeds from that back into the fund and bought more lots and built more houses. There wasn't really anybody at that time putting money on a large scale into the east side of town.

What strategy finally let people be able to acquire Nehemiah homes?

For the first 15 years the people rent the



Rev. Silas Johnson has pastored Calvary Baptist Church for the past 40 years.



Rev. Silas Johnson and his wife, Loretta, have three sons: Isaiah, Samuel and Silas. PHOTOS COURTESY SILAS JOHNSON

homes, and at the end of the 15 years they can buy the home for what we have left on the cost to build the house. We are now in the process of selling the first 20 houses to the individuals who live in them.

How does that make you feel to see your vision become a reality?

I'm really ecstatic, I'm overwhelmed. It really makes me feel like I've done at least one thing to help somebody. We are just excited about people getting their own homes. With the east side of town being about 75% nonowner occupied, we want to reverse that and have as many people in this area own their own houses.

Let's look into an optimistic crystal ball. What do you hope Springfield will be like 20 years from now?

I would hope that the east side of Springfield would be as thriving as the west side. We need a balanced city, one that is not too top-heavy on one side. East Springfield is the entryway from I-55; people have to come through the east side of town to get to the west side without going all the way around Springfield. I hope to see that people do not have to drive across town to get a decent job.

What is your advice to young people?

Since I'm a pastor, I think young people must get to know who our Lord and Savior is. Get to know who you serve in this world. The next advice is to plan for the future – it's called generational wealth. If you don't have generational wealth, we will be in the same situation 25 years from now, trying to make ends meet with no income



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 2024 Best Places to Work.

PLEASE JOIN US AS WE HONOR THE 2024



Reception & Ceremony

Thursday, May 23, 2024 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

United Community Bank, Montvale

1900 W. Iles Avenue, Springfield, Illinois

Please RSVP by Friday, May 17th

To Michelle at Springfield Business Journal **Email:** info@springfieldbusinessjournal.com | **Phone:** 217-679-7806

Capitol Radio Group





PHOTO BY JOSH CATALANO

Front row (left to right): Sheila Wetherell, JJ Gerard, Tara Frisch, Tina Goodwin, Betsy Park, Amber Weller, Karen Trueblood, Dave Dahl, Ed Steele, Dina Michaels, Kelly Greeley; Back row: Mark Birtch, Dave Daniels, Sean Lynch, Blake Stadel, Chris Bullock, Jane Cochran, Geri Binkin, Greg Manfroi, Mike Connolly

For nearly 40 years, Capitol Radio Group and Saga Communications Inc. of Illinois have been a staple in the Springfield radio landscape. Former CEO Ed Christian acquired WDBR, WYMG and WTAX radio stations in the mid-1980s, and over the years the group has added 101.9 The Wolf, Pure Oldies 107.5 and 101.1 The Outlaw. In 2023, WTAX celebrated 100 years on the air, and WDBR celebrated its 50th anniversary.

"We added a full-power FM signal for WTAX in 2021," said Chris Bullock, vice president and general manager. "Our radio stations have won numerous Silver Dome Awards from the Illinois Broadcasters Association, Crystal Mic Awards from the Illinois News Broadcast Association and a Crystal Radio Award from the National Association of Broadcasters." Also, numerous Capitol Radio shows have been recognized as the Best of Springfield by readers of *Illinois Times* and selected as a Reader's Choice for *The State Journal-Register*.

"Our mission is to serve the city of Springfield and central Illinois with live programming and local personalities. We have a full news team and a staff that is dedicated to serving our business community and our listeners," Bullock said. "In 2019, we invested in our office space with a full remodel, making it a beautiful place to invite listeners and clients to visit, and a wonderful space to work in each day."

Bullock believes they have established a desirable culture at Capitol Radio Group. "We have a building full of talented people that have different interets and backgrounds," he said. "We work together very well, and we have fun doing it." Bullock encourages creativity in his staff both inside the building and out, as everyone has different areas of expertise. They have a passion for helping businesses grow, and they love entertaining the listeners and being involved in the community.

Bullock's favorite part of working for Capitol Radio Group is the support from corporate leadership to manage staff in a way that works best for the listeners, which is also highly gratifying to the team. "Our company believes strongly in live, local radio personalities and news broadcasters. It's not that way at all radio station groups," he said. "I firmly believe that the bond a listener forms with our personalities is

unbreakable. What we do and say in between songs is the most important part of what we do."

Over the past year, Capitol Radio Group has taken steps to increase its marketing options and resources in order to help local businesses be more successful. "We are in the midst of taking another step in that direction," Bullock said. "WTAX is the area's news source, and we will be adding even more to that very soon. We have installed a new transmitter for WDBR, and we have upgraded several of our studios."

Future goals for Capitol Radio Group revolve around making the stations available to be heard anywhere someone wants to listen. "Over the air, on your phone, on your computer or with your Amazon Alexa or Google Home device, we continue to strive to be the very best at customer service and localism in central Illinois," Bullock said. "We will continue to help businesses grow, and we want to do everything we can to support our local schools and colleges, industries, our parks and golf courses, tourism, our local leaders and business community. We love Springfield, and we will always try to do more."

BEST PLACES TO WORK 2024





First Impressions Day Care Center



PHOTO BY JOSH CATALANO

Front row (left to right): Danielle Kruemmelbein, Tina McClain, Patricia Allen, Taelor Jenney; Second row: Kelsey Lindsay, Briana Wyzard, Colleen Ikerionwu, Carolyn Siddell; Third row: Safia Bel Fellah, Mackensi Wilson, Robynae Jackson, Etter Malone; Back row: Linda Wells, Cassandra Rechner, April Lindsay, Kayleigh Adams, Sidney Carney

First Impressions Day Care Center has been in business since 1997. The company operates out of an updated, converted home located in a historical area near downtown Springfield. In 2016, Colleen Ikerionwu, a mother of six and former police officer, purchased the day care.

The company's mission is to provide quality care for children in a learning environment that is fun. At First Impressions, students partake in a curriculum that prepares them for kindergarten. During summer months, the kids get to go on field trips. "The center has the feel and closeness of a home, but the security and feel of a school at the same time," Ikerionwu said.

Communication is an integral part of the program, and parents are encouraged to communicate with staff on a regular basis, especially if they have questions or feedback. Parent-teacher conferences are offered twice a year so parents have the opportunity to see their child's portfolio and hear about how they are doing on a daily basis at the day care. Parents don't have to worry about their children going hungry; they are served well-balanced

and nutritious meals that include breakfast, lunch and a snack every day. With the secure keypad entry and fenced-in play area, the children's safety always comes first.

April Lindsey has been with the company for a year. She loves the way the staff is able to come together and be there for each other as well as the children. "We are a day care family here at First Impressions," she said.

"The teachers have great lesson plans and make being at the center fun. Some days the children do not want to go home because they are having way too much fun," said Patty Allen, who began at First Impressions a few months ago. She also appreciates that the children are shown a great deal of love each day. First Impressions accepts students from 6-weeks-old up to 6 years, and they are cared for by teachers who have been certified by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Safia Bel Fellah has been with the company for 15 years, and has worked for several other day cares, but none compare to First Impressions. "This is the best one I have worked at," she said. "It feels like family here. The staff love children and care about their co-workers."

Over the last year many accomplishments have been achieved by the center's staff, said lkerionwu, including several completing their teacher qualifications and getting close to earning their degrees in early childhood education. "Our goals for the future are to continue to give high-quality child care, expand into another existing day care center and to receive recognition for the Gold Circle of Quality," Ikerionwu said.

According to Ikerionwu, First Impressions Day Care Center is the best place to work because of the positive environment where employees know they are valued and respected.

"Knowing that the employees' opinions and thoughts matter makes the work environment so much better," said Tina McClain who has worked at First Impressions for six years. "Also, being in a work environment where your co-workers feel like family is a plus, and working with teachers who care about the students, mentally and physically, is amazing."

Hanson Professional Services





PHOTO COURTESY OF HANSON PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Chairman and CEO Sergio "Satch" Pecori, left, with Jeff Ball, president and chief operating officer.

In 1954, Walter E. Hanson, along with two of his former students from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, founded Hanson Professional Services in Springfield. The firm's name has changed throughout the years, but Hanson's commitment to their clients reflects an allegiance to their most-valued asset – their employees.

"When Walt founded Hanson, he started what would become a legacy of employee pride and ownership," said Darrel Berry, corporate communications manager. "The company has grown to more than 500 employees in 28 offices across the country."

Hanson's current chairman and CEO is Sergio "Satch" Pecori. The president and chief operating officer is Jeff Ball. Together, they lead the company with the same values as Walter Hanson. "The employee stock ownership trust remains a coveted benefit and tangible reward of working for our clients," Berry said. "We also have many family ties within our ranks, where family members have drawn each other to join the Hanson team. Our paid internship program has attracted some of our legacy employees. It offers college students summer positions to complement their classroom experience and has led to many permanent, full-time jobs upon graduation."

Hanson offers exceptional health and wellness benefits, tuition reimbursement, generous time off and flexible work schedules. These benefits result in lengthy employee tenure and a low turnover rate. "We provide eight paid holidays, including a floating holiday. Our paid time off and family care leave benefits include 10 days of 100% paid maternity or paternity leave and 10 days of elder care in addition to short-term disability benefits," Berry said. "We're proud to be employee-owned and offer a company-funded ESOT as an additional retirement vehicle above and beyond our 401(k). The opportunity to participate in exciting projects and be a part of an entrepreneurial environment is another major advantage of working at Hanson."

In 2023, Workforce Research Group ranked Hanson as the No. 4 Best Place to Work in Illinois in the medium-employer category. They were also ranked No. 2 in the large-employer category by Best Companies to Work for in Florida by Workforce Research Group. Engineering News-Record ranked Hanson No. 186 on its Top 500 Design Firms list.

"We also won a variety of project awards, including the American Public Works Association Illinois Chapter's Public Works Project of the Year award, in the transportation category for our work

on the Pekin, Illinois, Front Street renovation," Berry said. The company was also a winner in the structures category for improvements to the Stratton-Bolger Lock and Dam. Finally, Hanson was given Special Achievement Awards from the American Council of Engineering Companies of Illinois for each of the projects mentioned.

Hanson hired 121 new employees in 2023, strengthening its dedicated team of employee-owners in locations across the United States. This growth in personnel will only help the company in the future. "Partnering with our clients to meet their goals and exceed their expectations is our primary goal moving forward," Berry said, "along with maintaining and enhancing the employee culture that has helped us expand and fulfill the needs of clients in a growing range of industries. Finding new ways to show our customers and employees that we value them will always be our highest priority."

In 2024, Hanson will celebrate its 70th anniversary. The company looks forward to many more years of making a positive difference in the world. "We foster a collaborative team environment in which employees thrive through exciting project work, are supported by leadership and value flexibility in their work schedules," Berry said.





Troxell



Front row (left to right): Hannah Russell, Dana Zake-Martin, Mikaela Bennett-Bateman, Heather Higgins, Lori Curry, Kate Von Behren, Bryce Bilyeu, Kayla Smith, Shanna Zake, Alysse Hewell, Kendra Bollin; Second row: Stacy Ledbetter, Linda Rhodes, Jessica Polhemus, Michelle Utinske-Kolb, Kris Shaughnessy, Betty Ingram, Andrea Petrilli, Laura Waldeck, Marisa Marty, Kim Fenton, Emily Birtch, Sean McDonald, Mick Polhemus; Third row: Corey Kohlrus, Austin Mudd, Rebecca Bigelow-Williams, Pattie May, Kristi Lanzotti, Kaitlyn Damm, Courtney Kinney, Pam Pherigo, Kathy Ohl, Cathy Schmidt, Jodi Neece Angie Wallace, Nick Nissen, Chris Leming, Corine Lomprez, Steve Hewell, Mike Reisinger, Ryan Augustine, Dave White; Top row: Jake Rourke, Aaron Jones, Sean Sexton, Kyle Dyson, John Eck, Jr., Kevin Timoney, Heidi Gibson, Sharon Wanamaker, Kim Cochrane, Chris Velton, Todd Sowle, Cass Casper, Wayne Ball, David Payne, Juan Salas, John Geyston

PHOTO BY JOSH CATALANO

Troxell opened its doors in 1887 and still remains locally owned and operated today. Although there are branches all over Illinois, Troxell is based out of Springfield. The company has grown significantly over the years but has not lost the touch of a small business. "Troxell is a group of individuals who enjoy each other and have each other's backs," said Alysse Hewell, chief experience officer. "Our team works hard together, and we can all lean on each other when needed."

Employees at Troxell agree that management cares about their employees. "When the roads are bad, they make sure we are safe, they acknowledge our service by celebrating our anniversary each year and the hybrid schedule shows they value a good work/life balance," said Lori Curry, benefits account executive. "Even though we have gotten bigger, it still feels like a family and not a big business. Our atmosphere is very positive, and who doesn't want that every day? The owners of the company are part of the team and not separate from us, which speaks a lot to the people and the family feel of the organization."

Troxell doesn't just focus on the clients – the company also holds its employees and

communities in high esteem. Raechal Stacy, who has been with Troxell since 2022, said, "Troxell values their employees, and that allows us to value our jobs and our clients. We are truly a big family. There are so many different personalities and experiences in our company, and we may have different positions and titles, but at the end of the day we all have the same purpose."

"Troxell cares very deeply about the needs of their employees," said Kathy Ohl, a commercial lines account manager who has been with Troxell since 1997. "Troxell is a very family-oriented company. It makes me feel that my needs as an individual are considered, as well as making feel that I contribute to the team as a whole."

Last year was busy for Troxell, as the business hired a chief operating officer, chief financial officer and chief experience officer to run the day-to-day operations of the organization. "This is a change from the five partners running the business alongside the management team," Hewell said.

Troxell also revamped HR Solutions, a service line that helps small businesses remain compliant and competitive in the job market. The company remains a top 100 national independent insurance agency in the nation.

"Troxell was voted a Big I Best Practices Agency in 2022 and 2023, which is a huge accomplishment in our industry" Hewell said. "We have hired great talent over the last year and continue to review our benefits portfolio to attract and compete with other large agencies in our industry."

Looking to the future, Troxell is dedicated to remaining local and independent while setting the company up for the next generation. Troxell plans to develop its succession plan by bringing in six new shareholders while also continuing to hire strong talent in operations and sales.

The company also plans to expand into other communities and grow the brand to be recognizable in target markets. "We will keep living our company vision, mission and values as well as continue to work to protect the individuals, families and businesses that we represent," Hewell said.

"You are not just a number at Troxell. You are an individual that the team cares about," Hewell said. "I've seen so many acts of kindness for team members, clients and individuals in the community. Troxell is a family that would do anything for each other."



REST PLACES TO WORK 2023

Watts









PHOTO COURTESY OF WATTS COPY SYSTEMS

PHOTO BY JOSH CATALANO

Skip and Carol Watts opened Watts Copy Systems in Springfield back in 1982. The foundation for the company was to create a premier service organization in central Illinois that would focus on customer satisfaction and customer retention. The original company motto was, "Where service is more than a promise." Currently led by Carol Watts, the same motto continues today and sets the tone for all Watts' team members in their daily interactions with customers.

Watts has grown from a small business to a larger organization which now includes a Springfield corporate facility plus eight regional sales and service centers across central Illinois.

"We have been an authorized Sharp dealership for over 40 years and have won numerous awards from Sharp," said Patrick Gilley, vice president. "In 2010, Watts expanded our product line to include Kyocera printers, MFPs and larger systems. Watts quickly became one of the top 25 Kyocera dealerships in the nation, exceeding the sales performance of many dealerships in large, metropolitan areas."

Creating a culture focused on great customer care, where they view customers as partners, has created a positive environment for the Watts team. "It is a lot more pleasant to come to work knowing

that your company stands behind its promises and strives to always do the right thing for our customers," Gilley said. "When employees see that level of customer commitment from Watts, they realize the company will do what's right for our team members as well. Our team members get tons of accolades from our customers, which makes them feel good about the job they are doing and feel good about the company. We strive to continually recognize individual performances in all departments with both small and large rewards."

In addition to the company's other benefits and perks, Watts became an ESOP in 2020, with employees now sharing directly in the capital.

According to Gilley, Watts team members love the fast-paced and ever-changing environment that the company and industry provide. Although not for everyone, the tenured team members at Watts enjoy assisting each other in order to achieve whatever needs to get accomplished. "We all play dynamic roles within the team and enjoy the job diversity that our company offers," he said. "Our organizational chart has very few layers, with everyone engaging with and serving customers, including Carol Watts and the leadership team."

At Watts, accomplishments are measured by

both customers and team members. Watts and Gilley are proud of the tenure and experience of their team. "Over one-third of our team has been employed at Watts for over 20 years," Gilley said. "Over 50% of our team has been at Watts for over 10 years."

Many of the tenured employees are field service technicians who have unparalleled knowledge and provide expertise in the region. The company's customer retention rate and Net Promoter customer service scores consistently exceed 90%. In 2023, Watts was tied for No. 1 in the nation for customer satisfaction three different times.

"Our future goals include market-share growth and continuing to improve how we spread the word about Watts to those not partnering with us now," Gilley said. "We realize our customer service commitment has led to our phenomenal growth and success over the years and know that staying the course is essential for continued growth and success. In an era where service has declined in so many industries and personal connections become fewer and fewer, Watts will stick to what works best for us and continue to abide by our motto, 'Where service is more than a promise."





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 fifty 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.























































































To move or remodel? Inventory shortages, interest rates continue to be problematic

By Pamela Savage



Aaron Acree, owner of Michael von Behren Builder, says more people are doing remodeling projects that help take advantage of their outdoor space. PHOTO COURTESY MICHAEL VON BEHREN BUILDER

To say the last three years have been interesting for the real estate market, including home builders, is an understatement. The pandemic changed how people go to work and how they spend time at home. Remote work prompted some to buy larger homes with more outdoor space, and some people remodeled existing homes to include a home office and outdoor additions such as three-season spaces. These renovation trends continue, and homebuyers are facing fierce competition due to the very low inventory of homes for sale. Currently, buyers seem to be interested in homes that are spacious and environmentally friendly.

Elizabeth Watson is a real estate broker with The Real Estate Group and said there is a shortage of homes for sale in the Springfield area due in part to high interest rates. Watson said that many homeowners have favorable interest rates on their current mortgages and are not motivated to sell, which doesn't help the tight inventory situation. It's a tough time to be a buyer, and a great time to be a seller.

However, there is good news on the horizon for anyone looking to make a move. Economists are forecasting lower interest rates this year, which will motivate some homeowners to sell and provide some inventory, but competition will be stiff. Watson and others are hoping 2024 will bring lower rates, higher inventory and much-needed relief for frustrated buyers.

What are buyers and homeowners looking for this year as they seek to either move or improve upon their current homes? And, how can you best prepare yourself for the future?

Watson says buyers are looking for en suite bathrooms, large kitchens that open to informal dining, family spaces and design updates such as hardwood or vinyl plank flooring to replace carpet. Office spaces continue to have a place on wish lists since many people who began remote work during the pandemic are still working a hybrid schedule.

Aaron Acree, owner of Michael von Behren Builder, agrees that making the most of extra space continues to be important for homeowners who are remodeling. This often looks like putting in an addition, finishing a basement or remodeling to incorporate an office or a man cave. The addition of covered patios and decks are trending as people want to take advantage of their outdoor space.

As for building and remodeling, Acree said that higher interest rates, the rising cost of building materials and labor have affected the home-building market. However, demand for remodeling projects remains strong.

Acree says that energy efficiency is also an important consideration for many homeowners. Smaller touches such as window and door replacements not only help keep your home up to date, but increases energy efficiency. Acree says that whether you plan to stay in your home or sell in the near future, new windows and doors are wise investments that always pay off in the long run. Other popular features are solar panels and car chargers in garages for electric vehicles.

Whether buying or renovating, consulting with a professional real estate broker or contractor before you make any big decisions is highly recommended. Watson suggests that sellers spend the time and money to do necessary repairs before they list their home. A broker can guide you to the cosmetic updates that will help sell your home quickly and at the right price. For buyers, Watson suggests that if you buy now while interest rates are on the higher side, you can plan to refinance as rates go lower in the future.











- Commercial and Residential HVAC
- Commercial and Residential Plumbing
 - Commercial Roofing
 - Site Utilities
- State of the Art Pipe Fab and Sheet Metal Shop
 - UV Piping Lining

Get ready to experience the power of 300 years of combined excellence as Henson Robinson Company, Reliable Mechanical, and Petersburg Plumbing & Excavating join forces. When it comes to your HVAC, plumbing, roofing, and site utility needs, we are the unrivaled option that guarantees unmatched expertise and exceptional service. Trust us to deliver innovative solutions and exceed your expectations every step of the way.

HOME BUILDERS AND REMODELERS

	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE / EMAIL	#OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/PRINCIPALS			
1	Buraski Builders, Inc. 3757 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-5172	buraski.com office@buraski.com	22	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 4132 N. Peoria Road Springfield, IL 62702	217-496-3112	zinnconstruction.com phil@zinnconstruction.com	16	Phil Zinn	50%	50%	2003
4	DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen 3730 Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62711	217-529-9300	dreammakerspringfield.com info@dreammakerspringfield.com	14	Curt and Deb Trampe	100%	0%	1998
4	Griffitts Construction Co., Inc. 1501 N. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-1431	griffitts.net griffitts@griffitts.net	14	Dennis Griffitts Gwen Griffitts Vicky Griffitts-Runyon	95%	5%	1953
5	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
6	Creasey Construction of Illinois 3450 S. Park Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-1277	creaseyconstruction.com info@creaseyconstruction.com	12	Jan Creasey Lisa Creasey Justin Creasey	90%	10%	1983
7	Moughan Builders, Inc. 3140 Cockrell Lane Springfield, IL 62711	217-899-5484	moughanbuilders.com jim@moughanbuilders.com	8	James E. Moughan David P. Moughan	10%	90%	1992
8	All-C Construction, Inc. P.O. Box 9737 Springfield, IL 62791	217-787-1900	AllCConstruction.com allcconstruction@att.net	6	Frank Conder Paula Conder	30%	70%	1999





- PARKING LOTS
- DRIVEWAYS
- SEAL COATING
- · OIL & CHIP
- CONCRETE
- RECYCLED ASPHALT



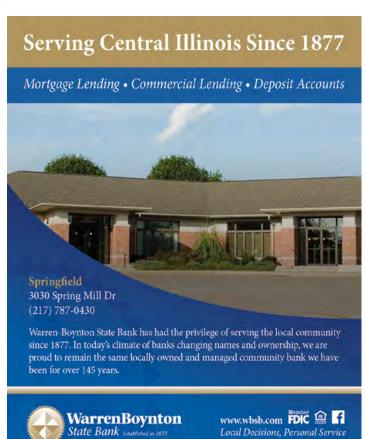




217-528-9407

3600 North Dirksen Pkwy • Springfield, IL • ronfurmanspaving.com

	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE / EMAIL	#OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	PARTNERS/PRINCIPALS	% REMODEL RENOVATION	% NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION	YEAR EST'D
9	Craig Ladage Builders, Inc. 14915 Kennedy Road Auburn, IL 62615	217-438-9206	clbuilders@royell.org	5	Craig Ladage Debbie Ladage	40%	60%	1977
9	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
9	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
9	Roth Homes 350 Williams Lane Chatham, IL 62629	217-483-6086	rothhomesinc.net	5	Terry Roth	25%	75%	1984
10	Coady Construction Co., Inc. 143 Circle Drive Springfield, IL 62703	217-502-0602	adamcoadyconstruction.com coadyconstruction@comcast.net	4	Adam Coady	30%	70%	2006
10	Howl & Bay P.O. Box 5272 Springfield, IL 62705	217-899-9070	howlbay.com info@howlbay.com	4	Nick Weaver	75%	25%	2020
11	Cochran Construction 336 N. Second St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-414-4690	andrewcochranconstruction@gmail.com	3	Andrew Cochran	20%	80%	2008
11	MBK Construction & Remodeling LLC 2508 Pebble Beach Drive Springfield, IL 62702	217-553-0455	mbkotner@comcast.net	3	Marcus Kotner	95%	5%	2001
11	Ryan Davison Builders 73 Woodland Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-747-8374	rdavisonbuilders.com info@rdavisonbuilders.com	3	Ryan Davison	75%	25%	2023
12	Paula Ryan Designs 3149 Hedley Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-523-3976	paularyandesigns.com paularyandesigns@gmail.com	2	Paula Ryan	100%	n/a	2010







City of Springfield penalized for violating Fair Housing Act

By Dean Olsen



Two of the three adult male residents are pictured in front of their group home on Noble Avenue. The city of Springfield has been ordered to pay compensatory damages to the residents, as well as civil penalties, for violating the Fair Housing Act by trying to limit where such homes could be located. PHOTO BY LEE MILNER

The 7-year-old federal court case that determined Springfield illegally discriminated against people with disabilities through residential zoning is approaching a conclusion.

The late U.S District Court judge Richard Mills ruled in March 2020 that the city violated the federal Fair Housing Act through a spacing ordinance prohibiting two homes for people with disabilities from operating within 600 feet of each other.

A federal jury in July 2022 then decided the city should pay a total of \$293,000 in damages for the violation. Included was \$162,000 in compensatory damages to the three adult male residents of the home that led to the lawsuit, on Noble Avenue near Washington Park, and to their guardians.

The jury also awarded \$131,000 in compensatory damages to Individual Advocacy Group, a Romeoville-based nonprofit that was providing services to the men in the Community Integrated Living Arrangement home, or CILA, that they began renting in 2014.

IAG contended it didn't know there

was another group home nearby and that it deserved a waiver from the zoning requirement.

IAG and Sangamon County resident Mary Valencia, sister and guardian of one of the original three residents, Alan Dennis, who died in 2017 of natural causes at age 62, first filed the civil lawsuit in December 2016.

The lawsuit prevented the three men from being forced to leave the home after the Springfield Zoning and Planning Commission and the City Council in November 2016 voted to deny a conditional permitted use application that would have granted an exception from the spacing requirement.

Mills issued a preliminary injunction in 2017 that prevented the city from kicking the men out of the home while the case proceeded.

After the 2022 jury decision, payment of damages remained pending while a different U.S. District Court judge, Sara Darrow, considered a civil penalty against the city requested by the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of Illinois. Federal prosecutors joined the case as a plaintiff in

2017.

Darrow on Dec. 7 ordered the city to pay a civil penalty of \$61,982 to the federal government. The judge also ordered that the city pay IAG \$53,654 in "prejudgment interest."

The U.S. Attorney's Office said this was one of the largest civil penalties that the U.S. Department of Justice has obtained against a municipality in Illinois for violations of the FHA.

Still remaining is the issue of attorney fees, with IAG wanting the city to pay the agency's legal costs and the city contending that some of the attorneys charged rates that were too high and unjustified.

Rulings on the merits of the case and damages took place during the administration of former mayor Jim Langfelder, when the city's corporation counsel was Jim Zerkle. Zerkle never filed an appeal.

The current corporation counsel, Gregory Moredock, who is part of new Mayor Misty Buscher's cabinet, said he doesn't think the city will appeal Mills' ruling or the jury's

award of damages to the individuals. He said he will recommend that the City Council amend the spacing ordinance.

However, Moredock told Illinois Times on Jan. 22 that some issues still need to be decided before the city pays damages, the civil penalty and interest.

"We have until a final order - after attorney fees are resolved - to decide whether to appeal any or all aspects of the case," he said. "A final decision on whether and what we will appeal has not been made as of this date."

When issuing the civil penalty, Darrow noted that the city argued the spacing rule "was adopted to protect group homes from being segregated into a single neighborhood" and that the spacing rule was enacted by city officials in 1990 "in a good faith effort to comply with the requirements of the FHA.

However, Darrow faulted the city for not updating the ordinance after a 2002 federal court ruling said such a spacing requirement would be discriminatory.

"Ignorance of the law is no excuse." the judge wrote in her December ruling, adding that the "case law interpreting the FHA's disability provisions had sufficiently developed by 2016 to find blameworthy the enforcement of this ... discriminatory spacing rule."

Darrow said the city's zoning ordinance made it more difficult for people with disabilities to transition from institutions to residential living situations in the community. That right was guaranteed by the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Olmstead vs. L.C., she said.

Darrow said the civil penalty against Springfield will "make clear to municipalities that these facially discriminatory spacing rules may not be used to hinder the trend of shifting persons with disabilities from institutions to community-based residences."

Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division said in a news release that the court's decision "makes clear that there are real consequences to cities and other municipalities when they unlawfully and immorally exclude people with disabilities from residential neighborhoods."

U.S. Attorney Gregory Harris of the Central

District of Illinois said the case resulted in a "groundbreaking civil rights decision." Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua Grant said: "This case illustrates what can happen when government action erodes a basic human right. A group of individuals almost lost their home."

Darrow permanently enjoined the city from taking any action against the owners or residents of the home and ordered city officials and staff to undergo fair housing training.

Charlene Bennett, chief executive officer of Individual Advocacy Group, said she hopes other municipalities in Illinois that still impose restrictive and potentially illegal zoning on people with disabilities take note of the Springfield case.

"I'm hoping it gets resolved soon," she said. "I'm just so disappointed it's taken this long for justice to occur."

Bennett said it was difficult to hear the prejudices of some neighbors toward people with disabilities aired at public meetings in Springfield in 2016 before IAG decided to file

"It's been a rough struggle," she said.



Imagine a bank that's about the stories of your life, and not just about transactions.

We bring neighbors and local businesses together to help you thrive.

We're here to help you achieve the story of your life.





Bank wisely to live confidently.





SPRINGFIELD 1925 S. MacArthur Boulevard 2601 N. Dirksen Parkway

3601 Wabash Avenue



012024-C

REAL ESTATE FIRMS

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE	WEBSITE/EMAIL	MANAGING PARTNER(S)/ OWNER(S)	NUMBER OF LICENSED AGENTS	YEAR EST'D
1	The Real Estate Group, Inc. 3701 Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62711	217-787-7000	thegroup.com info@thegroup.com	Michael D. Oldenettel designated managing broker 55 individual broker/owners	238	1997
2	Keller Williams Capital 3171 Robbins Road Springfield, IL 62704 Garrison Group Keller Williams 739 S. Fifth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-303-8445 217-303-0202	YourKWteam.com info@kwrealtycapital.com	John Kerstein designated managing broker	96	2016
3	Re/Max Professiosnals 2667 Farragut Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-7215	viewspringfieldhomes.com ronduff@remax.net	Ron Duff, managing broker Jim Fulgenzi, owner	64	1986
4	Century 21 Real Estate Associates 2030 Timberbrook Springfield, IL 62702	217-789-7200	realestateassociates.c21.com kgraham367@aol.com	Kevin Graham	14	2004
5	The Real Estate Group, Inc. 1046 W. Morton Ave. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-7800	thegroup.com info@thegroup.com	Michael D. Oldenettel designated managing broker	12	2017
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	11	2011
7	Campo Realty, Inc. 1213 Carroll St., rear Pawnee, IL 62558	217-625-4663	camporealty.com admin@camporealty.com	Nicholas Campo designated managing broker	8	2001
7	Kennedy Real Estate LLC 400 W. Market, P.O. Box 764 Taylorville, IL 62568	217-824-8888	kennedyrealestatellc.com jford@kennedyrealestatellc.com	Helen Kennedy managing broker	8	2011
8	Re/Max Results Plus 1610 W. Lafayette St. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-9613	remax.com	Scott Eoff, managing broker Judy Eoff, owner	7	1996
9	Curvey Real Estate, Inc. 611 Springfield Road P. O. Box 677 Taylorville, IL 62568	217-824-4996	curveyrealestate.com curvey@ctitech.com	Joe Curvey, managing broker and owner	6	1985
10	Heritage Real Estate Group 201 E. Main St. Rochester, IL 62503	217-498-1072	heritagerealestategroup.org info@heritagerealestategroup.org	Emily Walker designated managing broker	5	2022
10	Welcome Home Realty 211 N. Main St. Chatham, IL 62629	217-483-5501	welcomehomerealtyil.com welcomehomerealtymail@gmail.com	Jen Chance	5	2015
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	3	1986
11	Steve Hills REALTORS 900 S. Main St. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-9589	hills@jlnc.net	Dianne Steinberg	3	1965
12	River Birch Realty LLC 1228 S. Seventh St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-572-1225	riverbirchrealty.managebuilding.com riverbirchrealtyrbr@gmail.com	Phillip Anderson, managing broker Isaac Anderson, owner	2	2019
12	Do Realty Services, Inc. 600 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-391-3636	bpo@dorealty.net	Stephanie L. Do president designated managing broker and owner	2	2002
13	Grojean Real Estate 360 W. State St. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-4151	grojeanagency.com cgrojean@grojeanagency.net	Charles Grojean	1	1947



Not just for professionals

Inspired by the professional kitchen, KOHLER® semi-professional faucets bring upgraded style and functionality to your kitchen. The innovative sprayhead on the Graze® semi-professional faucet rotates in 90-degree increments, which allows you to set the spray button exactly where you prefer it—to the left, right, front or back. This innovation adds convenience when tackling tough kitchen tasks.

Learn more about the complete Graze kitchen faucet collection at **KOHLER.com** or at your local **Connor Co.**.





1400 S. 9th St. Springfield, IL 62703 217-544-9612 www.connorco.com

Homes are selling quickly and cash is king

By Holly A. Whisler



Jane Hay, a broker and partner with The Real Estate Group, says the current market is very competitive for homebuyers, with many sellers getting multiple offers. PHOTO BY LEE MILNER

Whether you're the homebuyer or the seller, the current housing market requires you to be prepared, decisive and ready to move forward swiftly. That was the message emphasized at the Chatham Area Chamber of Commerce's February luncheon, held at Illinois Realtors, which focused on the area housing market. The panel discussion included Jane Hay of Jane Hay Sales & Staging at The Real Estate Group; Todd Musso, Musso Real Estate Team at The Real Estate Group; Tracy Formea of Formea Insurance Group; Frank Stefano, Bank of Springfield; and Sherry Shaffnit, First Bankers Trust. Kathy Nichelson of Capital Area Realtors moderated the discussion.

Todd Musso, broker and partner with The Real Estate Group, said that homes are selling more quickly than in 2023. Year to date, the average time on the market for a single-family home is 24 cumulative days, and only 22 days for a single-family attached home, such as a duplex. He said the Springfield area market "is a conservative

market, which means that these numbers are new to us, and for the homeowner who wants to sell, you better be ready because your home is going to sell fast."

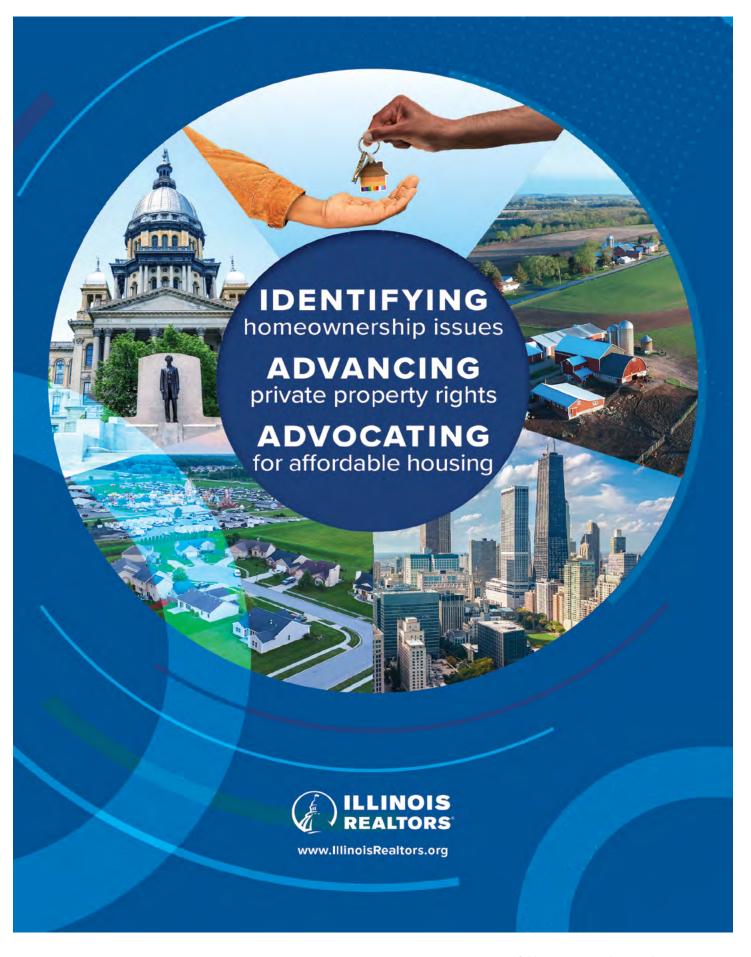
Jane Hay, broker and partner with The Real Estate Group and leader of the Jane Hay Sales & Staging Team, said, "Homes are selling so quickly that if a buyer has a house to sell, they may need a bridge loan if they find the house they want to purchase prior to selling their home."

The Springfield-area market is also very competitive for homebuyers. Hay said sellers are getting multiple offers, and the majority of offers accepted are cash or conventional loans with a local lender. Sherry Shaffnit of First Bankers Trust recommends a buyer meet with a local lender to get pre-qualified for a mortgage before meeting with a real estate agent.

It's important that buyers understand all aspects of the mortgage application and what they can afford prior to shopping for homes. Shaffnit

advises her borrowers to bring two years of taxes, pay stubs, bank statements and two forms of identification with them for the first meeting to get pre-approved. Once approved, she said, "I like to touch base about every 30 days."

While a buyer is figuring out how much they can afford in a mortgage payment, they also need to include their home insurance premium in that figure. Tracy Formea of Formea Insurance Group said before inquiring for quotes, know the date the roof was updated, the age of the furnace and the above ground square footage of the home you intend to purchase. For homeowners wanting to save on their premium, Formea recommends bundling auto and home insurance, having a centrally monitored alarm system and automatic water shut off. She said it's worth asking if occupation, education and credit score are considered when quoting insurance. Formea added that it's advantageous to call on independent agents who can shop quotes from a variety of sources as



compared to a captive agent that works with one agency exclusively.

In 2023, there were 1,372 homes in Sangamon County purchased with conventional loans and 543 purchased with cash. Although there are programs available for those who do not qualify for conventional financing, the path of least resistance is what's best for the current market, said Frank Stefano of Bank of Springfield.

Hay agreed, "The cleaner the offer, the better." A seller looks more favorably on a buyer's contract when that buyer is offering cash or conventional financing with a local lender. It gives the seller extra assurance that the financing is solid, and real estate agents have relationships with area bankers. Hay said, "It's easier to work with a local bank. I have their cell numbers, and can get ahold of any local banker in the evening or on the weekend. They understand our market." Above all, there is the element of trust, since both are working on behalf of the buyer.

As sellers are comparing multiple offers, many of which are for over the asking price, they are not necessarily selecting the offer with the highest dollar amount; rather, they may choose the offer with the right dollar amount and the most attractive terms. This is where the competition revs up, and buyers need to be creative in crafting



Kathy Nichelson of Capital Area Realtors moderated a panel discussion about the current state of the residential real estate market at an event the Chatham Area Chamber of Commerce hosted at Illinois Realtors on Feb. 8. PHOTO COURTESY CAPITAL AREA REALTORS

their offer to make it stand out from the rest. Hay educates her buyers before they start looking at homes so they understand what it takes to make a strong offer under current market conditions. She said it's important that buyers listen to their real estate agent because they need an experienced homebuyer on their side. Some term considerations buyers might entertain are offering to pay an appraisal gap, waiving a home inspection, offering to clean up whatever the seller leaves behind or renting back to the seller to allow them time to pack and move.

Musso reported that the data shows there is not much difference between the list price and the sale price in Sangamon County. Last year, 97% of single-family homes sold for 97% or more of the original list price, and that figure was 99.5% for a single-family attached home. Therefore, the listing price is generally close to what the seller will get for their home, and what the buyer can expect to pay.

It's a tough time to be a buyer, but a great time to be a seller. Whichever side of the transaction you're on, it helps to educate yourself about the current market conditions and work with local professionals to ensure a smooth process from start to finish. SBJ





Promoting healing of children and their families through compassionate and supportive care.

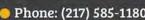
If something just doesn't feel right Or if you have questions about your child's mental health? CALL US FIRST!

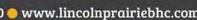
options also include:

- Telehealth Assessments & Therapy
- Virtual Assessments and Consultations Available
- Medication Management
- Individual, Group & Family Counseling
- 🧶 Partial Hospitalization Program
- Outpatient Therapy



5230 S. Sixth Street Road, Springfield, IL 62703 OPhone: (217) 585-1180 www.lincolnprairiebhc.com











www.ilneca.org Ed Midden – Springfield Division Chair Billy J. Serbousek – Chapter Manager www.ibew193.com Mac Broglin - President David Wells - Business Manager & Financial Secretary

LABOR AND MANAGEMENT WORKING TOGETHER IN THE ELECTRICAL CONTRACTING INDUSTRY

• Springfield Division NECA Members •

AmeriCALL Communications Company INC. Melanie McDaniel

Melanie McDaniel 447 N. Walnut Sc., Suite B Springfield, IL 62702 217-522-2255 + www.americalline.com

Anderson Electric, INC. Rodney Frey 3501 S. Sixth St. v Springfield, IL 62703 217-529-5471 www.anderson-electric.com

B & B Electric, INC. Todd Brinkman 3000 Reilly Dr. • Springfield, IL 62703 217-528-9666 • www.bnbelectric.net Egizii Electric, INC. Carole Keating 3009 Singer Ave. • Springfield, II. 62703 217-528-4001 • www.eciholding.com

Gano Electrical Contracting, INC. Adam Craddock 701 Caldwell • Jacksonville, IL 62650 217-243-1414

> Mansfield Electric Co. H. Edward Midden, III 4425 Peoria Rd. • Springfield, II. 62702

Porter Electric Stephanie Grigsby 509 N Chicago St. Lincoln, IL 62656 309-241-5306 Prairie State Plumbing & Heating, INC. Jerry L. Judd

Jerry L. Judd 1499 W. State Route 2 Athens, H. 62613 217-636-9000

Senergy Electric, Inc. Matthew Gacománi 519 N. Flm S. Williamsville. II. 62639 217-566-2826 www.senergy-electric.com

Technical Solutions & Services, Inc. Jeff Pennington 1509 Woods Farm Lu, Springfield, II. 62704 217-836-7346

I don't just see a customer. I see you.



Cortesi Ins and Fin Svcs Inc Mark D Cortesi, Agent 924 Clock Tower Drive Springfield, IL 62704 Bus: 217-787-1727 Monday-Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm

While other insurance companies just see a customer, I see a neighbor in my community. I'm here to get to know who you really are so I can help life go right.

LET'S TALK TODAY.

& State Farm®

1706838

State Farm, Bloomington, IL



As one of America's leading providers of recycling and waste services,

Republic Services® delivers simple and reliable solutions for your **construction project**. With our nationwide presence, a wide range of resources and single point of contact, we offer:

- · A 99.9% pick-up reliability rate
- Solutions to help you achieve your sustainability goals
- Online account management through the MY Resource™ app

Please Call Today 217-377-0173



Sustainability In Action.

APPRAISERS

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE WEBSITE / EMAIL	NUMBER CERTIFIED APPRAISERS	OWNER/ PRESIDENT	% COMMERCIAL % RESIDENTIAL	YEAR EST'D
1	Taft Appraisal, Inc. 1999 Wabash Ave., Suite 205A Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-5533 barrytaft@aol.com	4	Barry Taft	90% 10%	1989
1	Field Level Agriculture, Inc. 2341 West White Oaks Drive, Suite A Springfield, IL 62704	217-498-9660 fieldlevelag.com seth@fieldlevelag.com	4	Seth M. Baker	98% 2%	1996
1	Zeigler Appraisal Group 528 W. Vine St. Springfield, IL 62704	217-725-0196 zeiglerappraisal@aol.com	4	Mark Zeigler	0% 100%	1978
2	Elder Valuation Services 3000 Professional Drive Suite 200 Springfield, IL 62703	217-414-2201 michael.elder@eldervaluationservices.com eldervaluationservices.com	2	Michael D. Elder, MAI	95% 5%	2013
2	Williams Appraisals 881 Meadowbrook Road Springfield, IL 62711	217-793-9234 john.williams50@comcast.net	2	John Williams	0% 100%	1993
3	Green Appraisal Service 3624 Wexford Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-1277 greenappraisalservice@comcast.net	1	Angela K. Chiaro	0% 100%	1994
3	Kienzler Appraisal Service 2131 Lindsay Rd Springfield, IL 62704	217-525-6050 greg@apraze1.com	1	Gregory Kienzler, SRA	95% 5%	1973
3	Michael J. Call Appraisal Service 837 South Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62704	217-741-9790 217-747-0252 callappraisals@comcast.net callappraisals.com	1	Michael J. Call	0% 100%	1987
3	Phillips Appraisal, Inc. 6305 Wind Tree Road Springfield, IL 62712	217-529-3929 217-341-5999 rjp01@comcast.net phillipsappraisalinc.com	1	Randall J. Phillips, SRA	0% 100%	2000



RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL



TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT SETS US APART FROM THE COMPETITION:

Over 16 years of service in and around Springfield Service for all air conditioners and furnaces Rebates and specials on AC and furnace services Flexible financing options with approved credit Excellent repair and installation services Amazing customer service and round-the-clock care 100% Guaranteed service

BORMIDA MECHANICAL SERVICES, INC

217-210-2662 • 2100 E. Clearlake Ave • Springfield, IL 62703 www.bormidamechanical.com



HOME OF THE MAMMOTH SCOOP **EQUALS ONE CUBIC YARD!**



We sell:

Mulch - 5 different types plus playground mulch Landscape gravel (sold in bulk) Pulverized Topsoil Recycled rock Flagstone (sold by the pound)



We accept:

Broken concrete ____ for recycling



All gravel is weighed on our state certified scale

217.525.DINO(3466) 3600 N. DIRKSEN PARKWAY

SPRINGFIELDJUNKAWAY.COM



* Serving Sangamon/Menard/Logan Counties *



NO BAGGING · NO BOXING · NO LOADING · WE DO IT ALL

SPRINGFIELD JUNK AWAY Small or Large Jobs Welcome!

ANYTHING GOES

YOU NAME IT

LOW RATES · ON TIME · REFERENCES

Trusted by your neighbors for over 20 years. YES, WE RECYCLE!





WHOLE HOUSE/APARTMENT CLEANOUTS · OFFICE & BUSINESS CLEANOUTS FURNITURE · MATTRESSES · LARGE APPLIANCES · ELECTRONICS

That empty feeling: Can vacant office space downtown be transformed into residential dwellings?

By Catherine O'Connor



The Ferguson, Bateman-Kennedy and Booth buildings combined represent 61,844 square feet of vacant Springfield downtown space. Rick Lawrence, who began the project in 2012, is now hoping to find a new development team for completion. PHOTO BY CATHERINE O'CONNOR

The paradox of America's deserted downtowns and the affordable housing crisis has been reported on by well-known media outlets such as PBS, CNN, The New York Times and Slate magazine. One potential solution to this problem is to convert vacant commercial space into residential housing. Although this potential solution comes with many barriers, it's not stopping progress in some larger cities that have a vibrant rental market, a lack of affordable housing and abundant vacant commercial buildings.

But according to Mike Jackson, who has decades of experience with the downtown-revitalization movement throughout the country, Springfield is like numerous other

cities that present a dichotomy of challenges to downtown office transformation. Prior to his retirement, Jackson was director of the Historic Preservation Division of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and is quite familiar with the challenges of working with older properties that require modern updates.

Many developers find there to be a financing gap in commercial to residential conversion projects due to high upfront construction costs that do not support the return on investment, according to Jackson. Most government-incentive grant programs or low-interest loans come linked to prevailing wage requirements which add to the high cost of construction.

Fortunately, Springfield has an array of low-rise, pre-war, multistory vacant office structures that can, without costly redesign, be efficiently transformed into places where people could live. But developers feel a squeeze in financing options since the city's downtown TIF funds are mostly spent down. Government grant programs require community support and can become unwieldy to manage, even for well-intentioned, competent developers and investors.

The Myers Building at the southwest corner of East Washington and Fifth streets is one such distinctive jewel of downtown. Configured with open floor plans and plenty of operable



- Free pickup
- great stuff
- great prices
- great cause

Store hours: 1005-11100-0, 8-1100-5 27448-6110-217-523-2740



COADY CONSTRUCTION

Custom Home Builders

- NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION
- REMODELING AND ROOM ADDITIONS
 - FAMILY OWNED SINCE 2006

217.502.0602

adam@adamcoadyconstruction.com • www. adamcoadyconstruction.com

Morgan Stanley



Nancy Klay· Senior Registered Associate, Kip Leverton- Associate Vice President, Financial Advisor, Chad Golembeck- Associate Vice President, Financial Advisor, Chad Golembeck- Associate Vice President, Financial Advisor

Experience, intellectual capital and dedicated personal service to help you meet your life goals.

The Mid-Illinois Group at Morgan Stanley

3201 West White Oaks Drive Suite 201 | Springfield, IL 62704 | 217-547-2900 | https://advisor.morganstanley.com/mid-illinois-group Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC. Member SIPC. CRC5960342 9/23

windows on each floor, it offers beautiful wood trim, high ceilings, natural lighting and airflow, making it a good candidate for residential living units, according to Richard Myers. His ancestors founded Myer Brothers and he currently serves as chair of the executive committee for the family's real estate holdings.

Built in 1925, the 10-story Myers Building was designed with lower-level retail and traditional offices on upper floors, which have slowly dwindled to around 50% occupancy. The Myers family is exploring ways that the building can continue to contribute to Springfield's downtown vibrancy well into the future.

In 2021, the family worked with a developer based in Manhattan, Kansas, who conducted a market study showing the need for housing within Springfield's downtown, noting massive office space vacancy rates, according to Myers. With a \$30 million plan to create 114 units of studio, one and two-bedroom apartments, financing the deal was feasible only with taxcredit incentives through the Illinois Housing Development Authority.

However, by 2022 the project was scrapped after hitting some financing obstacles. To offset the differential of relatively low rent potential and high overall construction costs, the IHDA program – which offered tax credit incentives to meet the funding gap – would have required 100% of the units to be priced for "workforce housing."

According to Myers, "The mayor at that time was resistant to supporting the project with all lower-rent and no market-rate units. With a more than \$5 million doughnut hole, the IHDA financing would have been the only way to make the project feasible."

From his perspective, Myers suggests that the best configuration for the property might be a mixed-use project, combining both commercial and residential elements. At this point, the Myerses are looking for a developer and have met with city officials and council members, who seem supportive of their efforts.

Rick Lawrence, president of the commercial construction firm Siciliano Inc., has devoted years to bringing life back to three century-old downtown Springfield buildings at the southwest corner of Sixth and Monroe streets. The Ferguson, Bateman-Kennedy and Booth buildings combined represent 61,844 square feet of vacant Springfield downtown space. Begun as a planned residential and retail development, the project has hit multiple obstacles since its inception more than a decade ago.

According to Lawrence, the Booth building exterior is now 90% complete and in the



In 2022, a \$30 million-dollar plan to create 114 residential units in the Myers Building was scrapped after hitting financial obstacles. The owners are now searching for a developer who would be interested in a mixed-use project for the space. PHOTO BY CATHERINE O'CONNOR

process of historic restoration review. The Booth interior was approximately 40% complete before work was halted.

Exterior aluminum grilles that had been added over the historic façade of the Ferguson building to modernize it have been removed to meet Springfield Downtown Historic District's certification requirements. The interiors of each floor are now wide open and ready to be developed, according to Lawrence, who said the asbestos and lead abatement have also been completed.

At one point the plan was to create 16 apartment units in the eight-story Booth building and four units in the central three-story Bateman-Kennedy buildings. Several luxury loft-style units could be configured in the upper floors of the Ferguson building, which also has first floor corner restaurant space that has housed popular eateries over the years.

Lawrence hopes that space will soon house

a restaurant again and has been working with Corey Dickerson and Smarjesse Taylor, who plan to own and operate Aunt Lou's Soul Food. "They have both been graciously hanging on while I have worked through issues with the city," Lawrence said. "At this time, they have all the approvals that are required and are working hard to make a soft opening happen for the annual St. Patrick's Day parade on March 16."

In addition, Lawrence is currently completing structural renovations and working with designers to create a functional plan for the trio of buildings, which he envisions will be turned over to a new development team for completion. Lawrence suggests innovative design elements such as a rooftop bar and restaurant and event spaces on upper floors that could be rented for wedding receptions and other gatherings would make the project more viable for the current market.

Knob Hill Landscape Co. aquires Evergreen Landscape. Expanding services in Springfield.

"We are thrilled to welcome Evergreen Landscape to the Knob Hill family," said Landon Kirby, President of Knob Hill Landscape Company. "This acquisition allows us to expand our footprint on the west side of town and provide a wide variety of services to all of our customers."

"I am excited to join forces with Knob Hill Landscape Company," said Chelley Gerber, Owner of Evergreen Landscape. "Knob Hill's reputation for amazing design and build projects is unmatched, and we are confidentthat our customers will be thrilled with the expanded services that we will be able to offer."



Our clients are the heart and soul of our company. We strive to buld long lasting relationships with transparency, honesty and the fact that we build a bigger family with every project.



Phone: (217) 314-9435 Serving Central Illinois Landon Kirby - Owner/Operator

www.knobhilllandscape.com



www.facebook.com/knobhilllandscape

Dealing with mine subsidence

By Sarah Delano Pavlik

You may have been shocked to hear that mine subsidence forced Lutheran High School to relocate in 2022. The idea of your place of business or residence being affected by a similar event might seem alarming at first. Springfield is known for the presence of underground mines, so this possibility might be more common than one might realize.

Legally defined as a lateral or vertical ground movement that directly damages a structure and that results from the collapse of a man-made underground mine, mine subsidence can happen in areas where coal, clay, limestone and other minerals were extracted. In other words, if the top of a mine collapses below the ground, then damage can be done to the foundation above the mine. Springfield had five operational coal mines in the early part of the 1900s, which means a large part of the city rests on top of coal mines. You can view a map showing the locations of these mines at https://ilmineswiki.web.illinois.edu/wiki/ILMINES.

Evidence of mine subsidence includes cracks in walls or floors, doors and windows that are no longer square, floors not being level, and even the sounds of cracking and popping as the house shifts. According to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. "The first thing a homeowner should do once subsidence damage is suspected is to request the Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Division investigate and evaluate the damages to determine if hazardous conditions exist." The homeowner should then contact his/her insurance company and file a claim with his/ her agent. "The agent, through the homeowner's insurance company, will in turn notify the Illinois Mine Subsidence Insurance Fund and

inform them that an insurance claim has been submitted."

It is likely mine subsidence is included in a property owner's policy. In areas such as Sangamon County where a considerable amount of land is undermined, mine-subsidence insurance is mandatory. Ryan Augustine, a partner at Troxell insurance agency, said, "All insurance carriers in Illinois must provide coverage unless the purchaser rejects the coverage in writing. That means that it is important to pay attention to your quotes and the forms you are signing when looking at new insurance policies they are not all created equally."

Of course, we would all prefer not to have a claim for mine subsidence. To help avoid surprises, the Illinois Mine Subsidence Disclosure Act states that the seller of a property must disclose to the purchaser and lender all insurance claims paid to the owner for mine subsidence-related issues. In addition, the Illinois Residential Real Property Disclosure Act requires a seller to disclose if he/she is "aware of mine subsidence, underground pits, settlement, sliding, upheaval or other earth stability defects on the premises."

Once subsidence has begun, it can take years for the full effect to be known. Augustine added, "Insured and carriers should be aware that mine subsidence claims could potentially take years to be fully resolved as the land named in any claim must completely settle prior to any final payouts." Per the DNR, "The homeowner has many on-going responsibilities while the ground movements are active. Major areas of responsibilities include: 1) making routine safety inspections and temporary repair, and 2) examining various financial and reconstruction options in order to make

informed decisions about the final repair of the home. Safety inspections should include inspecting utilities such as gas, water and sewer lines for leaks; functionality of doors, windows, and electric lines and weather proofing."

Augustine also noted that, "Limits for mine subsidence coverage are usually the same as your main policy for other perils like fire or wind. However, the maximum amount an insured can purchase through their standard carrier is \$750,000. This limit is established in state statue, with the Illinois Mine Subsidence Insurance Fund providing reinsurance to insurance companies up to this limit."

The insurance payout to Lutheran High School was the maximum \$750,000, which is not enough to replace the high school, but is enough to cover most residential properties in the Springfield area. Augustine warned, "Given the mining history of the area, individuals and businesses must be aware of this potential risk posed by mine subsidence and be educated on the limit of \$750,000 that is offered by a majority of carriers.

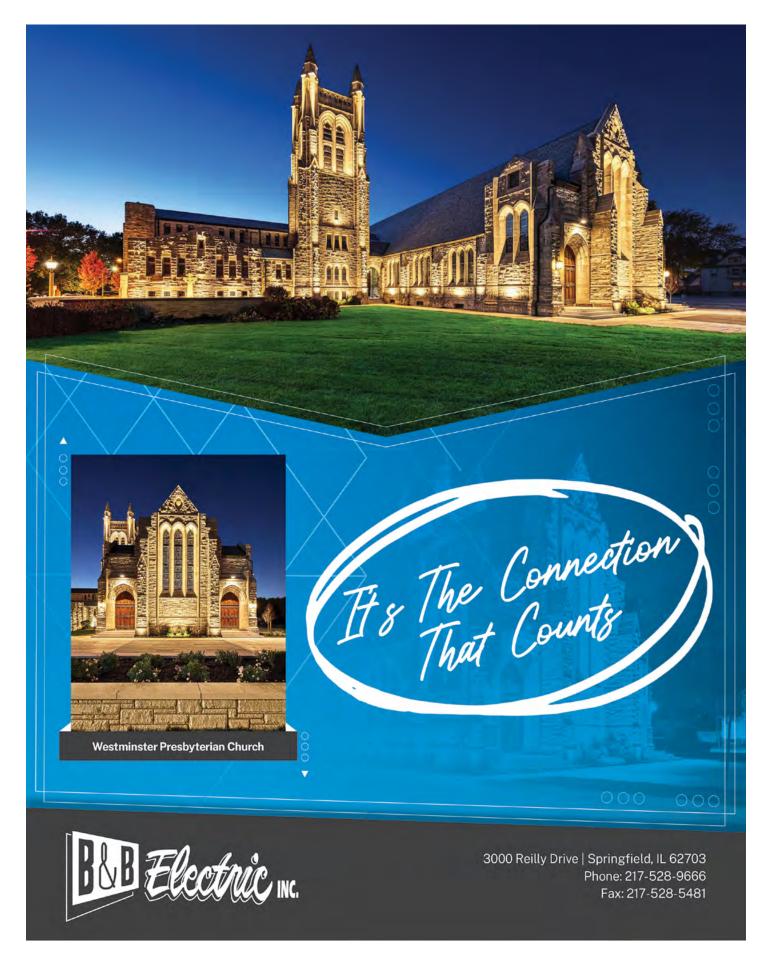
"So, mine subsidence is one of many factors to consider when buying and insuring a property in Sangamon County. Engage a quality inspector and insurance agent, and hopefully you will avoid subsidence altogether or be covered if your property is affected."

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









Promoting our community

Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance focuses on the positive

By Janet Seitz

The Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance reports that it has helped facilitate more than \$1.6 billion in economic development opportunities coming to the region over the next several years. The organization seeks to advance economic development and partnership opportunities across the region.

The SSGA engaged with local business leaders last year through about 100 business retention and expansion visits, more than 25 community presentations and attending 15 business development-related conferences. It also hosted a number of events, according to the organization's 2023 Year in Review report.

Created in 2018, the Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance's mission is to pursue economic prosperity and growth for Sangamon County and Springfield by creating a financially sound community that can attract new businesses and skilled talent while retaining the profitable companies and local workforce.

Ryan McCrady, a Sangamon County native who joined the organization as SSGA's president and CEO in 2020, stated the organization made strides recently with advocating and supporting projects such as the Scheels Sports Park, Double Black Diamond Solar, redevelopment of the former Pillsbury Mills site, Innovate Springfield, History Reborn documentary, Breeze Airways' new flights and the Downtown Springfield/Mid Illinois Medical District Master Plan.

He cited the most memorable experience of the past year as the Scheels Sports Park groundbreaking. "The spirit of the community was alive and well at that event," he said.

"It is challenging that many of our projects take multiple years to completion," McCrady stated. "Therefore, we face the challenge of keeping a positive mindset in the community while we anxiously wait to see the results. However, it is very rewarding when we see our persistence and patience pay off with a groundbreaking of a new development or the ribbon cutting at a new business."

In addition to recruiting new companies, McCrady believes it is important to support current businesses and find ways to help them expand. "It is the best way to grow our economy. Attracting new business is also important, but we have to be able to create a business climate that encourages our current businesses to stay here," he said.



Ryan McCrady, president of the Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance, speaks at the Sept. 20 groundbreaking for Scheels Sports Park. PHOTO COURTESY SPRINGFIELD SANGAMON GROWTH ALLIANCE

SSGA offers concierge-level service to businesses to assist them with their needs. "This reduces the time they have to spend making multiple inquiries and searches for resources and assistance," said McCrady. "This applies to current businesses and ones we work to attract to the community.

"The best way to support the community is through positive self-talk and interaction," McCrady added. "The Thrive In SPI campaign is a tool we use to create pride in our community. We also use it to attract new businesses and residents. Sharing that information and the social media traffic is a huge help to our efforts to grow the economy of Sangamon County."

Also thriving is the Thrive Ally Program, targeting those who are considering a move to the Springfield area or already arrived, to learn and hear directly from those who live, work and play here. Among those advocates for the area who serve as allies are Tom Frost and Julie Davis.

"I have always believed that Springfield and Sangamon County are a great place to live, work and raise a family," Frost said. "Our community offers so much more in addition to the world-class medical care, performing arts, sports, recreation, concerts, dining, etc. In working with many families who relocate here for employment purposes, I'm already talking up the benefits of our community. I've worked in the community for many years, and am grateful for all the families and businesses on the commercial real estate side that have entrusted me with aiding them in buying,

selling and managing. I got involved with the SSGA Ally program as a means of giving back to the community. I hear many times how 'awful' it is to be in Springfield and Sangamon County. I joined to promote the vibrancy of the community and tell positive stories."

"I believe everyone should give back to their community in some way, and the best volunteer opportunities lie in areas where a person has passion or expertise," said Davis. "For me, SSGA meets that criteria. The Springfield area is a great place to live. We have many of the amenities of a large, culturally diverse city. Yet we're small enough that folks have access to those amenities. We have something for everyone of every age. The people are welcoming and generous, making it easy to make friends. The housing market is far more stable than in most parts of the county. And I think there is no better place to raise kids. Being an ambassador for SSGA gives me the opportunity to share the Springfield I love."

"By working to grow the economy," said McCrady, "we provide career opportunities for our citizens. We also market the community to our residents to help make them aware of the many amenities that are available to them. We support the efforts of other organizations that help improve the quality of life for our residents."

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

Hillier Records Management

For organized data management storage.



Hillier Records Management

The Hillier Advantage Includes:

Secure Off-Site Records Storage | Computerized Tracking System
Daily Magnetic Media Exchange | Retrieval & Re-file
Climate Controlled Facility | Regular - Rush Emergency Services
24 Hour Service | Pick-up & Delivery

2728 S. 11th Street • Springfield, IL 6270: A Division of Hillier Storage & Moving Co. 217-525-8550



An introductory course to prepare individuals for the Federal Aviation Administration Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) Remote Pilot Knowledge Exam.

UAS Remote Pilot Certification Test Prep Course

Tuesdays and Thursdays April 16, 18, 23, 25 5-9:30 p.m. Kreher Agriculture Center, Room 1123

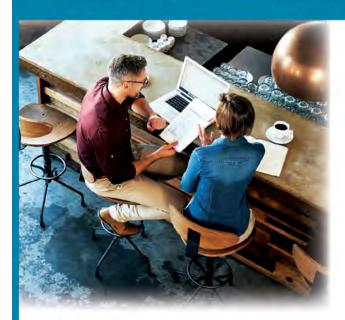
5250 Shepherd Road,

Springfield, IL Cost - \$399



More information at www.llcc.edu/uas To register, call 217-524-6749.

CEFCU® Business Loans



At CEFCU, your Business Loan is more than a loan — it's an investment. Enjoy benefits such as:

- Flexible financing options
- · Great rates
- Personal service
- · And more!

Choose your local Credit Union for all your business financing needs. Call 217.546.2010, or 1.800.633.7077 ext. 37481, or visit **cefcu.com/owner** today.



Not a bank. Better.

2424 W. Iles Avenue, Springfield (near White Oaks Mall) 2449 N. Dirksen Parkway, Springfield (near Lowe's) 1000 E. Lincolnshire Boulevard, Springfield (near Walmart)

cefcu.com









Health care news is sponsored by Skinner Copper & Ehmen Wealth Management www.scewealth.com • 217-753-4020 • Registered Investment Advisor

MEDICAL NEWS

Memorial Health names new board members









Michael A. Aiello Dr.

Gussie M. Reed

Three new members have been named to the board of directors of Memorial Health.

"We're proud to have a board that brings together people with a wide range of expertise from across the region we serve," said Ed Curtis, president and CEO of Memorial Health. "Each of these new members brings their own valuable perspective and experience to the work we do."

Eric D. Graue is a resident of Lincoln and a Merrill Lynch financial adviser with The Graue Group. He currently serves as chair of the Lincoln Memorial Foundation and is a past president of the Lincoln-Logan Chamber of Commerce. He earned a bachelor of science degree in general engineering from the University of Illinois.

Gussie M. Reed worked in the utility industry for more than 40 years, including as director of Division III for Ameren Illinois, prior to her retirement. She is involved in community service in the Decatur area and currently serves on the boards of directors for Decatur Memorial Hospital, Mamie D. Hayes Educational Foundation, Court Appointment Special Advocates (CASA) and Macon County Conservation District. She has a bachelor of arts degree in management from the University of Illinois.

Dr. David L. Griffen earned his medical degree from Penn State University and served a residency in emergency medicine at M.S. Hershey Medical Center. He was on the faculty of SIU School of Medicine for 30 years, where he was instrumental in the

creation of the Department of Emergency Medicine. Upon his retirement in 2019, Memorial Health and SIU established the David L. Griffen, M.D., Ph.D. Endowed Chair of Emergency Medicine as a recognition of his contributions to the field.

At their January meeting, the board also selected a slate of officers: Michael A. Aiello (Chair), Cheryl S. Martin (First Vice Chair and Treasurer), Barbara A. Farley, PhD (Second Vice Chair), Nina M. Harris (Secretary) and Todd W. Wise (Immediate Past Chair).

Other members of the board are Reginald Benton, Aimee Fyke, Randall Germeraad, Jennifer Gill, Joseph Hurwitz, Dr. Jerry Kruse, Sergio Pecori, Dean Robert Jr., Dr. William Putman, Diane Rutledge and and John Waddock.

Women's Power Lunch Against Cancer

Join Simmons Cancer Institute at SIU Medicine for the Women's Power Lunch Against Cancer on Thursday, April 4. The event will be held from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at the President Abraham Lincoln Springfield Hotel and feature guest speaker Dr. Bertice Berry, who will share a message of resilience, kindness, humor and hope.

The event is an opportunity to celebrate survivors, gather with friends and network, all while providing support to fight this horrible disease. Funds raised at this event are invested in cancer research at SCI.

Dr. Wiley Jenkins is researching an information-motivation-behavioral model intervention to improve awareness and

education surrounding HPV infection, its prevention and cervical cancer screening in individuals facing disparities. A second grant, awarded to Dr. Andrzej Bartke, is studying the role growth hormone plays in cancer. Age is a known risk factor and a better understanding of the effects of growth hormone on cells could impact cancer treatment options one day.



WOMEN'S EVENT CALENDAR

On Wednesday, March 6, Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois will be holding its 4th annual Women's Business Showcase event, presented by Heartland Credit Union. WECI has over 15 sponsors and over 60 exhibitors supporting and representing the diverse enterprises of women business owners. This event coincides with International Women's Day, whose goal is to raise awareness about the struggles of women the world over and honor their achievements.

This event will be held at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield, 3000 S Dirksen Pkwy., from 4:30-7:00 p.m. and is free and open to the public. The first 200 guests will receive a swag bag filled with giveaways provided by our sponsors. There will be a cash bar and drawings for a variety of giveaways.

Our exhibitors have businesses that range from antiques to fashion and cosmetics, fine jewelry to corporate gifting to crafts, and services including human relations, insurance, laundry, real estate and chimney sweeping.

Sponsored by



CAPITAL MORTGAGE TEAM

CapitalMortgageTeam.com



The first rule of employee engagement: We don't talk about employee engagement

By Kelly Gust

In today's hot job market, getting great talent in the door can be a challenge. According to a recent article on LinkedIn, 53% of employees are thinking of leaving their current position in 2024, and 77% of employers are worried about attracting and retaining top talent. For some organizations, creating a great culture where employees want to work (and remain working) happens naturally. For others, especially as the business grows, it requires intention and focus.

So how do great places to work keep employees engaged? The first rule of employee engagement - we don't talk about employee engagement. Not because it's a secret, but because it's become somewhat of a corporate buzzword. Don't get me wrong, engaged employees are the driving force behind increased business productivity, satisfied customers and an enjoyable work culture. Studies consistently show that companies with high engagement outperform their competitors, are more profitable, have lower turnover, lower theft and lower rates of accidents and injuries. Simply put, these employees care more and are willing to go the extra mile.

When the team is strong and people know their roles, they communicate better, trust each other and remain focused on their goals. In this environment, work becomes exciting and even fun. Instead of talking about engagement, challenge yourself to focus on factors that result in the feelings of loyalty and commitment that you wish to create.

Start by talking about the basics: job fit,

manager fit and team fit. Hiring for job fit requires an understanding of the work to be done and 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. Most employees are hired to do a different job than their manager, yet many managers were promoted without being developed for their people skills, self-awareness and values required to become a great-place-to-work type of boss. Take time to develop your managers and teach them how to manage their employees the way they like to be managed.

Once you've mastered job fit and manager fit, consider team dynamics. Often where there are teams, there is the potential for conflict about priorities, goals, ideas and values. At best, this creates friction that slows productivity; at worst, good employees leave.

Great places to work foster positive team relationships by helping teams to understand and appreciate each other's strengths and each other's differences. 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. They help employees understand their roles and help people to get along with one another.

Feelings of engagement are also created when people feel a sense of accomplishment. While it's rewarding when an employee

feels they belong to a team, it's absolutely electric when they can say, "I belong here, I make a difference. I built that, I helped a customer and I contributed to society." Great organizations communicate their purpose and mission, and then act upon it consistently. They help employees see how their job makes a difference.

Another way to foster engagement without saying the word engagement is to show appreciation for employee contributions. While gifts, rewards, bonuses or pay increases don't hurt, a simple thank you can go a long way to boost morale and motivation.

Providing opportunities for growth and learning, such as opportunities for training, mentorship or career advancement, shows employees that you are invested in their success.

And finally, employees want flexibility. This term has come to be associated with remote work; however, it also can mean schedule flexibility and autonomy in selecting shifts. It can also mean understanding when an employee needs time off for personal reasons.

If your organization naturally experiences the frictionless, joyful work that arises when jobs, managers, teams and culture are aligned, keep it up. 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 I can assure you it's powered by action, not corporate buzzwords.

Networking Services. Sized for you. THREAT PREVENTION | ZERO TRUST NETWORKING | ANYWHERE PROTECTION Contact Sheila Feipel at 217.544.3100 today to schedule your security assessment. WIRELESS | FIREWALL | SWITCHING | CLOUD IT Networking | Communications | Security | Life Safety | Infrastructure | www.heart.net | 1.217.544.3100 |

Women Entrepreneurs SHOWCASE

March 6, 2024 • 4:30-7:00PM Crowne Plaza, Springfield, IL

FREE ADMISSION

Over 60 Sponsors and Exhibitors showcase their products and services

First 200 attendees will receive a swag bag with Giveaways and Prizes

> CASH BAR EXHIBITOR DOOR PRIZES





MEET AND SHOP LOCAL BUSINESSES,
OWNED BY TODAY'S WOMEN BUSINESS OWNERS

Aesthetics • Health/Wellness • Fashion • Cosmetics • Fine Jewelry Corporate Gifting • Crafts And Home Decor Events/Venues • Catering Bakery • Home And Family Services including: Human Relations, Insurance, Laundry, Real Estate and Chimney Sweeping & Much More

Learn more about membership and the Women's Showcase at wecispringfield.org

March 8 is International Women's Day, a day to raise awareness about the struggles of women the world over and honor their achievements, Our local event is not political in nature, however, but lends itself to "showcasing" women business owners' entrepreneurial spirit.







217-522-2255 • www.AmeriCALLinc.com 447 North Walnut Street • Springfield, IL 62702



Calendar

MARCH 2024



Capital City Toastmasters The Networking Group

Second Tuesday of each month, 11:45a.m. Meeting location varies. kbrittin@springnet1.com. 217-899-5099.

Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois (WE-CI)

Second Wednesday of each month. Meeting location varies. Email or call for more info. christine@bfi.us. 217-306-205.

McBrian Lincoln-Douglas Toastmasters Club

Thursdays, 6p.m. The club is dedicated to the development of communication and leadership skills. 3040 S. Lincoln Ave. 217-546-8624.

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. Call 217-789-0830 ext. 1301 or send an email to lhemingway@springfieldul.org for more info.

Mid-Illinois Communications Association

Meeting days, times and locations vary. MICA is a professional organization that champions the evolving communication field/discipline by fostering collaboration, promoting leadership, recognizing excellence and defending First Amendment rights. Email for meeting place and time. midilcommunications.org. brandyrenfro@gmail.com.

RISE Springfield

RISE Springfield is the young professionals networking group of The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. According to GSCC, the group was formed with the idea of using real interactions to support educational opportunities through professional development, community involvement, leadership and networking among young, emerging leaders. Event times and locations vary. See gscc.com for more info.

2024 Springfield RV and Camping Show

March 1-3. See the latest in campers and RVs. centralilrvshow.com. \$8, ages 12 and younger free. BOS Center, 1 Convention Center Plaza, 800-745-3000.

Ribbon cutting

Mon., March 4, 4pm. Join the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce for a ribbon cutting at Dabble's new location. 1704 Sangamon Ave. 217-687-1904.

Illinois Product Expo

Sat., March 2-3, 10am-5pm and Sun., March 3, 10am-3pm. Embark on a culinary adventure and enjoy a show-case of Illinois' finest flavors. Enjoy free samples from vendors, discover new savory delights and stock up on all-time favorites. Plus, sample wine from the Illinois Wine Garden. agr. illinois.gov. Orr Building, Illinois State Fairgrounds, 801 Sangamon Ave., 217-725-8047.

4th Annual Women Entrepreneurs Showcase

Wed., March 6, 4:30-7pm. Fourth annual event will featuring more than 60 women-owned business exhibitors. This event is free and open to the public. The Crowne Plaza, 3000 S Dirksen Pkwy.

Visit springfieldbusinessjournal.com to add your event to the monthly calendar.



WE OFFER COMPETITIVE BUY/SELL PRICES ON American Eagle Gold & Silver Bullion Coins, 999 Silver Rounds and Bars and other Gold/Silver products.



We Bank On You



Scan. Tap. Bank. Call Us Today!



Peoples Bank & Trust

We Put People First.™

Open house on Carpenter Street improvements

Thu., March 7, 4-6pm. Learn about proposed improvements to Carpenter Street between Fifth and Sixth streets. Meeting will include project details, exhibits showcasing proposed improvements and opportunity for the public to provide feedback. No presentation is planned. Call for more info. Free. Kumler United Methodist Church, 600 N. Fifth St., 217-789-2255.

Coffee & Connections

Tue., March 12, 7:30-8:45am. A morning networking event offering a chance to meet other Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce members over coffee and a continental breakfast. gscc.org. \$5 for chamber members, \$15 for guests. Springfield Clinic Pediatrics, 3501 Old Jacksonville Road, 217-525-1173.

Ribbon cutting

Wed., March 13, 4:30pm. Makeover Dental is celebrating its new office. 687 E. Linton Ave. makeoverdental. us. 217-522-1111.

Chamber on Tap

Thu., March 14, 4:30 p.m. Chamber on Tap is the Chamber's monthly network building event. A Chamber member hosts the event, show-cases its company and provides food, drinks and casual atmosphere conducive for making connections. Members \$5 and nonmembers \$15. UIS Performing Arts Center, 2nd Floor, UIS Public Affairs Center, One University Plaza. 217-525-1173.

Ribbon cutting

Fri., March 22, 12-12:30 p.m. Green Hyundai plans to celebrate its new, state-of-the-art location. 610 W. Stanford Ave. greenhyundai.com. 217-525-1370.

Independent Coalition for Our Neighborhoods

Mon., March 25, 6:30pm. Springfield Independent Coalition for Our Neighborhoods (ICON) will hold a discussion on the topic of landlord registration for the city of Springfield. South Side Christian Church, 2600 S. MacArthur Blvd., 217-525-0304.

RISE & Shine with Young Professionals

Wed., March 27, 8:30 a.m. Melissa Gaynor and Jamie Toole of the Springfield Lucky Horseshoes will talk about the power of networking. \$5. Registration required. Coffee and breakfast to be provided by Café Moxo. The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, 501 E. Capitol Ave., Suite A. gscc.org. 217-525-1173.



Financing *created* to help small businesses grow • strengthen • expand

SBA 504 BUSINESS FINANCING

If you're considering buying, building or refinancing commercial real estate or equipment there's simply no better program on the market than the SBA 504 Loan Program. In fact, the financing terms offered through this program are so good, you owe it to yourself to find out more. With below-market fixed rates, repayment terms of up to 25 years and lower monthly payments, the 504 has already helped thousands of businesses this year...let's talk about how it can help yours.



Growth Corp is honored to serve as the host location for the Illinois SBDC for Central Illinois!

LESS MONEY DOWN | LONG REPAYMENT TERMS | BELOW-MARKET, FIXED RATES

Food and Drink | For advertising information call 217-726-6600



Locally Owned

Pick up • Delivery **Indoor Dining** 217-492-8800

Sunday & Monday Closed . Tuesday-Saturday: Kitchen is open 11am-9pm





CAPITALCITY.JOBS

Capital City

April: Ad space and ad copy due March 29 | Final ad art due April 10

Schedule your ad today!

Beth Irwin 217-679-7803 | Yolanda Bell 217-679-7802 | Ron Young 217-679-7807 | Haley Jackson 217-679-7804

TIME FOR A CHANGE?

LET US HELP YOU WITH ALL YOUR COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE NEEDS. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT-LEASING-SUBLEASING-SALES OR PURCHASE. CALL TERRI BLAKE MYERS OR STEVE MYERS TODAY TO BEGIN THE PROCESS.



Terri Blake Myers Licensed Managing Broker/LLC Member

Myers Commercial Real Estate, Inc.

1 West Old State Capitol Plaza Springfield, Illinois 62701 217-747-0019



Steve Myers Designated Managing Broker/LLC Member



Chatham Café has an expansive menu of breakfast, lunch and dinner items. PHOTOS BY BRANDON TURLEY

Chatham Cafe

By Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.

I was excited at the prospect of Chatham Cafe opening in Springfield on MacArthur Boulevard, but a fire in the almost-completed space dashed my hopes for a diner in my neighborhood. With that in mind, I decided to venture over to Chatham to see what the original Chatham Cafe is about.

Chatham Cafe looked like it had been recently given a makeover as the booths, tables and chairs looked new and the walls were freshly painted in a muted grey with tasteful art hanging on the walls. A half wall bisects the space into two sections.

There were four of us dining; we arrived at noon and Chatham Cafe was already hopping. There also seemed to be quite a few regulars. We appreciated that there were several tables to accommodate larger groups. Seating was generally split equally between tables and booths.

The menu is quite expansive, with three entire pages devoted to breakfast (served all day, of course) and another three pages devoted to appetizers, sandwiches, salads

and burgers, with a final page reserved for dinner entrees. There's literally something for everyone. And if that's not enough, there are also daily specials like Tuesday's deep-fried pork chop, or all you can eat fried walleye as well as daily soups like chicken macaroni and cream of cheeseburger.

After being quickly seated we looked

around and saw the generous portion sizes being served, opting not to go with any appetizers. Had we decided otherwise, we probably would have gone with the Pick 3 Combo of jalapeno poppers, fried mushrooms and onion rings (\$11.99).

We observed some of our fellow patrons who ordered salads, and again, the portion



Horeshoe. PHOTOS BY BRANDON TURLEY



Reuben sandwich with fries. PHOTOS BY BRANDON TURLEY

sizes were generous. The Grecian salad looked very good with all of the onions, green peppers, tomatoes, olives, cucumbers, hardboiled egg, feta and anchovies nicely dressed with an oregano-based Greek dressing (\$11.99, with chicken or gyro meat \$15.99).

For the health conscious, there are options like the classic low-calorie plate (hamburger patty, cottage cheese, hard-boiled egg and fruit, \$12.99), and the traditional tomato stuffed with chicken or tuna salad (with an egg, \$11.99).

I am an aficionado of the club sandwich, but only when it's served with actual carvedturkey breast rather than deli-style turkey breast. Chatham Cafe did not disappoint in this regard. The turkey club (\$11.99) came with a thick slice of turkey breast and perfectly cooked bacon on white toast. When I crave a club, this is what I want. It was served, like all other handhelds, with a bowl of soup and fries. Tots or onion rings can be substituted for an additional \$1, while a tossed salad can be substituted for \$1.59. In retrospect, I should have opted for the tots. Although the fries were nicely cooked, they were the coated kind that I don't prefer.

One guest went with the bionic burger (\$14.69 – with bacon, mushrooms, grilled onion and Swiss cheese). He decided to choose the tossed salad option. He was happy with both selections, noting that the burger patty itself had a nice char to it. It did look a bit messy to eat, but we didn't hear any

complaints. The tossed salad was exactly what one would think of and came generously seasoned with ranch.

My second guest decided to go with the Reuben (\$11.99). He was impressed with the sauerkraut (which was drained)-to-corned-beef-and-cheese ratios and also enjoyed the texture play between the melty gooey inside and crispy outside. He also commented that it paired well with the chicken noodle soup, which was reported as well-seasoned and with a healthy amount of chicken and noodles – a sentiment shared among those in the group who ordered it.

My last guest felt like breakfast and decided on the titan omelette (\$13.99 – bacon, sausage, ham, green peppers, onions and cheese). All of Chatham Cafe's omelettes are made with three eggs and come with hash browns and a choice of toast or two pancakes. It was a bruiser of a dish and covered about half of the plate. He asked for both the hash browns and omelette to be cooked well-done, and Chatham Cafe nailed it – neither was scorched but rather were nicely browned.

Service was friendly but not over the top. Our drinks were well attended, and our orders came out at the same time. We look forward to having a second location (sooner, rather than later, we hope) in Springfield. If you're planning to visit Chatham Cafe or order out, the menu is quickly accessible on their webpage.



Strawberry crepes. PHOTOS BY BRANDON TURLEY

Address: 414 N. Main Plaza, Chatham Phone: 217-697-1101 Website: thechathamcafe.com Hours: Monday – Sunday, 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

New businesses

Sangamon County new business registrations, Jan.16 - Feb. 15, 2024

Crowned by Kai Natural Hair Salon, 2920 Bennington Drive. 336-624-7080. Kaila Gillespie.

Glisten & Glow Beauty Bar, 408 W. Ellis St., New Berlin. 871-6430. Tabitha Haas.

Midwest Texting Services, 1111 Grooms St., Suite 1, Pawnee. 381-9745. John Zak.

Envi, 651 E. Linton, Suite 300. 341-9838. Marquesha Davis.

Scrubby, Dub, Dub, 1316 Bruce St. 502-6029. Judy Riley.

SPITZY'S SALVAGE, 416 W. North St., Auburn. 494-5114. Bruce Spitznagel, Barbi Ervin.

digiboardpros.com, 1913 Creighton Road. 718-0335. Jerry A. Rothenberg.

A Nu Look Salon & Spa, 901 Clocktower Drive. 691-3702. Shonice Smith.

Thrive Lawn Care, 4595 Tolliver Road, New Berlin. 319-9463. David Wayne Gentle.

Indian Restoration, 6507 Coolidge Drive, Cantrall. 299-1331. Surendranath Gummadi.

Middensphere, 214 E. Sangamon, Petersburg. 993-4811. Toni Lyn White.

Tremain's Lawn Care, 2300 Westview Drive. 801-4128. Troy Tremain.

Bolash Roofing & Construction, 19 W. Lewis, Divernon. 741-3857. Matthew Hopkins.

Da' Baker Man, 2250 Cedar St. 816-6906. Jamari Savion Dossie.

Dream, 14 Regency Court. 254-462-0891. Dorothy Austin.

1221 Photography, 845 S. Walnut St., Apt. 2. 303-2264. Zachary Adams.

Peyton N. Leonard, 7 Candletree Drive, Apt. 1. 240-848-3248. Peyton N Staff.

Mentoreis LLC, 2501 Chatham Road, Suite 5143. 312-489-8020. Ilhan Selcuk Tuncbilek.

P1 Construction, 5215 Bakutis. 871-0745. Beth A. Dougherty.

Sono Bello, 3223 Meadowbrook Road, Suite C. 447-448-3110. Thomas Garrison.

Freedom Hospitality LLC, 3446 Freedom Drive. 793-9277. Kirit Pansuria.

Gio's Cookies, 1013 W. Madison St., Auburn. 416-9159. Candace Curtis.

Spark By Hilton, 3446 Freedom Drive. 793-9277. Freedom Hospitality LLC.

Bark Side of the Groom, 3351 S. Sixth Street Road, Suite 5. 971-3072. Ashley Riemer.

Brother's Comfort Specialist, 6600 S. Sixth Street Frontage Road. 652-9245. Jonathan Kessler, Emmett Allen III.

B. Haye's Bait & Tackle Inc., dba B. Haye's Processing Co., 424 S. 11th St. 588-8087. Reginald Perkins.

Central Illinois Homeschool, 3213 Elderberry Lane. 972-5962. Harper Rose LLC.

Double Nickle, 12 N. Wesley St. 725-5330. Jacob G. Mason.

AJA Logistics LLC, 2430 Ladley Court, Apt. 8. 761-8779. Adjete J. Ako.



Marketplace | For advertising information call 217-726-6600



Morgan Stanley



Michael Witsman CFP®, ChFC® Senior Portfolio Manager Associate Vice President Branch Manager 3201 White Oaks Drive

Springfield, IL 62704

Michael.Witsman@morganstanley.com NMLS #1828659

© 2023 Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC. Member SIPC. CRC 5709123 06/23











217.529.9700 SolutionPrint.com 3135 South 14th St. Springfield, IL

Solution PRINTING

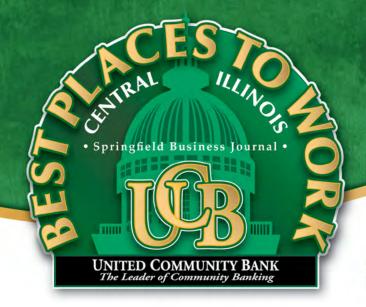


CONGRATULATIONS 2024 RECIPIENTS













United Community Bank is proud to recognize excellence in the workplace. This award is presented to companies who make a commitment to provide a quality workplace in our business community.

We salute each of these companies for being a "Best Place to Work!"

217-787-3000

Member PDIC UCBbank.com