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Changing lives, one class at a time

BY RHONDA BUCKHOLD
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Yes, Obamacare is flawed, but what's the alternative?

BY PATRICK YEAGLE
Associate Editor

It's been six years since the Affordable Care Act (ACA) became federal law. In that time, about 20 million people have gained health insurance coverage. If you ask Republicans in Congress, however, "Obamacare" has been ruined America.

Nobody truly loves the ACA. It's convoluted, cumbersome and flawed in some serious ways. But it's law, and despite years of melodramatic clamoring to "repeal and replace" it, Republicans still haven't managed to quite figure out the "replace" part.

Before we toss this thing in the trash, let's consider the reasons it was created in the first place. When people don't have health insurance but still need health care, they go to the emergency room, where their care is subsidized – usually at a more expensive rate – by taxpayers and hospitals. That raises your taxes and the price hospitals must charge their other patients. Making sure everyone is insured means fewer emergency room visits and less expensive care overall. It also means people who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford health care can get preventative medicine before their conditions spiral

out of control and require more costly care later on.

The most controversial piece of ACA is the insurance mandate, requiring everyone to have insurance or pay a penalty. To Republicans, it's another case of the big, bad government cramming an unwanted product down the public's throat. I'll believe their crocodile tears are real when they decide car insurance should be optional.

In order to make sure everyone can afford insurance, the ACA called for state insurance "marketplaces" that provide low-cost or subsidized private insurance plans that meet basic standards of coverage. Republicans sought to undermine the success of those free-market exchanges, preventing them from being established in some states. Do the subsidies for insurance equate to socialism? Only if you ignore that we already do basically the same thing for seniors through Medicare.

The Democrats share some of this blame. Smarter people than I have observed that the reason ACA is so convoluted and cumbersome is that it goes out of its way to preserve the free-market aspect of insurance instead of creating universal healthcare.

The Republicans' replacement for ACA

has yet to fully materialize. Their task force report is online at abetterway.speaker.gov, but even the authors admit it's only a blueprint that will take time to implement. Some of the ideas, like a tax credit to purchase insurance and a high-risk insurance pool, look suspiciously like renamed versions of Obamacare ideas. Other ideas, like capping damages for medical malpractice, are likely to be litigated endlessly and may leave patients in a worse position. There are even some truly good ideas in the plan, but it's unclear why they can't be implemented as amendments to the existing law.

One thing I've learned from covering the Illinois Statehouse is that good public policy rarely fits on a bumper sticker. By contrast, bumper sticker policy – e.g. "repeal and replace" – is easy to sell to the public, most of which doesn't have the time or inclination to actually learn the nuances of a given issue.

Where does bad policy come from? It almost always arises from knee-jerk responses to some real or perceived crisis. Good policy, on the other hand, comes from years of intense study, negotiation and compromise. It's not sexy or quick, but discipline never is. Republicans have used the years since Obamacare became law to grandstand and

pander, misleading voters with fear-mongering instead of working to improve a law everyone agrees could stand a makeover.

Instead of undercutting years of investment by medical providers, insurance companies, state governments and the federal government, Congress should amend the Affordable Care Act to fix its shortcomings. Republicans in Congress admit that replacing ACA will take a long time, but they've already started the process of repealing it. That begs the question of whether "repeal and replace" is really about the health and welfare of Americans or simply about embarrassing Obama.

Corrections to the January 2017 Springfield Business Journal:

In the profile of Dave Steckel on page 17, Mr. Steckel's family was reported incorrectly. He has a wife, Cathy, and no children.

The list of engineering firms on page 18 contained errors. Visit springfieldbusinessjournal.com for a corrected version.

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Changing lives, one class at a time

BY RHONDA BUCKHOLD
Freelance Contributor

Pivotal moments in life often present as hard decisions— to do one thing or another, which will ultimately change life as you know it. Charles Davis realized he'd had that moment when he graduated from the Illinois Department of Transportation's Highway Construction Careers Training Program in 2007 at the age of 45.

"It changed my life," Davis said. "I earn an honest paycheck. I got married. I have a mortgage and am a positive, productive member of society."

Davis is now a member of International Laborers Union of North America Local #477 in Springfield because of the program being taught at Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC). He took the initiative to apply for the program, which is fully funded through the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). He did the work required and now he is reaping the rewards and giving back by encouraging others.

"The program is making a profound difference in lives throughout Illinois," said Pam Simon, director of the Office of Business Workforce Diversity for IDOT.

Simon says the Highway Construction Careers Training Program – HCCTP for short – is intended to increase the number and relative percentages of historically underutilized individuals working on IDOT highway construction projects.

"The training program is proving to be beneficial beyond the intent of increasing diversity in construction careers," she said. "HCCTP utilizes members of the local trades as instructors and liaisons to the trade industry. The quality of work and availability to connect with qualified workers is being boosted by the school's partnerships."

She adds that the instructors train the students to real-world standards.

"This provides more fluidity for trainees to move into labor apprenticeships," she said. "Financial incentives are also offered to contractors who hire HCCTP trainees, creating

a greater chance of placement."

Brad Schaive, business manager at Laborer's International Union Local 447, says the program is "a great opportunity and investment."

"It opened doors that otherwise were closed to an entire group of workers who just didn't have a means to get there," he said.

Schaive has been involved since the inception of the program and has been impressed with the entire process, calling it "first rate" for the efforts and benefits to all the organizations and people involved.

"There is an emphasis on underrepresented groups, but mainly we are trying to provide qualified applicants to unions and contractors in the community," said Lynn Whalen, LLCC's executive director of public relations and marketing.

She adds that the entire program, which is administered by the Illinois Community College Board, is provided at no cost to students, thanks to grant funding from IDOT.

"Students are also given a stipend during the program to assist with transportation, childcare, and some other related expenses," Whalen said. "The grant also pays for all union application fees for students graduating from the program."

Julie Rourke, workforce development director, oversees many of the practical aspects of the classes that are held at the Workforce Careers Center on the LLCC campus.

"Our goal is to assist students in getting into a union apprenticeship program with one of the local unions," Rourke said. "We work with 16 different unions in our area. We have six part-time instructors throughout the program as well as several contractors who do the certifications for the program. They are all credentialed in education, union journeymen and certified trainers."

She says it takes commitment to graduate and to work through the apprenticeships, calling it "rigorous." The process begins with an orientation, a math and reading assessment and an individual interview. Students are required to have documentation for identity

and citizenship and to show they have a high-school diploma or GED.

The intensive 20-week pre-apprenticeship program starts with six weeks of classroom training. Rourke said that the program is working well, in part due to its standards for success. The class runs Monday through Thursday, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"Participants in the program are expected to treat the training as they would their job," Rourke said.

Classroom components are a crucial part of the curriculum, according to Simon.

"The aspect of the training that focuses on life-skills is to provide opportunity to those who come from challenging situations," she said. "Many of our students have never had to manage a checkbook or been on an interview, so we provide training in these areas to help them as they progress. We're providing them an opportunity to change their life, and they have to be committed to work hard."

Criminal history and prior work history are not disqualifiers. All prospective trainees are administered a drug test during the intake process. If they do not pass, they are welcome to apply again when they can pass it. Periodic random drug screening, maintaining a valid driver license and meeting strict attendance guidelines that mirror highway construction industry standards are required for real-world construction workers and thus are required for trainees in the program. Students who complete the program will receive a certificate from the LLCC Workforce Development Department.

IDOT's funding continues to provide assistance for students after they complete the training program.

"We also have a required follow up with students for one year; however, we do not have a limit on how long we will assist students," Whalen said. "We regularly alert students to job opportunities during and after the program. We send mailings about union application deadlines and keep an up-to-date job bulletin in the building. Students are introduced to LLCC Career Services staff and may use those services as long as they need.

"HCCTP is changing dynamics by creating more availability of a diverse, trained workforce.

"IDOT's role is to help ensure contractors have a diverse workforce," Simon said. "One of the ways to help contractors to meet their workforce goals is by utilizing this program."

Schaive agrees that the program is filling the gap by training and connecting the ready and willing workers with employers in need of employees who understand the expectations of the position they are filling. The fast pace of the construction business is part of the reason it has been slower to conform to a more diverse workforce.

"It brings the workers and employers together in a way that allows the work ethic and skill to be observed and crafted for specific needs, abilities and desires," Schaive said.

Toward the end, there is always a real-world project – usually more than one during a program. Students have participated in building projects on campus and in the community. They are currently planning a conference room for the Spring Street Veterans Renaissance in Springfield.

Rourke said that during fiscal year 2016, 48 students started the program and 43 of them completed it. Of those, 27 were African-American men and 12 were women. Now, 40 of the students from that class are employed in a job related to their training, with 39 of them being part of a union or union apprenticeship program.

Since his graduation in 2007, Charles Davis has returned to give a pep talk to the new students in each course.

"Working has given me a lot of self-esteem and freedom to make better choices," he said, explaining why he speaks to the new recruits. "Yes, it was hard work, but I feel that it is important for people to become informed about HIRE Education and follow suit."

Three class sessions per year are offered at LLCC. The final class session for this fiscal year begins Feb. 13 and will end in late June. Interested individuals may call Tom Spears at 217-786-3675 or visit the HCCTP website at bit.ly/highwaytraining. ♦



Brock Barnhill and Lori Britz



Frederick Joiner and Joseph Commer

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

Illinois could see boost from Cuba trade

BY MONICA STABILE
Editorial Intern

The Illinois agriculture industry is crossing its fingers that Congress will expand U.S. trade with Cuba. A bill to do just that is pending in the legislature, and Illinois could receive a huge boost in business opportunities if the bill becomes law.

Nestor Gutierrez, a Cuban immigrant and owner of Buena Vista Farms in Jacksonville, thinks that improved trade relations with Cuba would create opportunities for the Caribbean island whose land has been decimated by five major hurricanes and three tropical storms since 2008, causing serious crop failure and a reliance on food imports. But Gutierrez has reservations about ending the U.S. embargo to increase trade because of Cuba's inability to consistently pay for imports from other countries.

"There is opportunity, but in the long-term, they can't pay for it," Gutierrez said.

Since having fled the communist country during the Castro regime, Gutierrez has visited the island five times and occasionally sends money to family members still living in Cuba. At times, there is a shortage of food on the island

that makes it difficult for residents to plan meals.

"I send 20 dollars to family members in Cuba and they spend it in the black market for whatever they need," Gutierrez said. "Sometimes there are no potatoes."

Illinois is able to engage in limited trade with Cuba under the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA), a federal program enacted in 2000 that allows trade of certain U.S. agricultural and medical products.

"Illinois farmers are seeking a level playing field..."

Illinois is the largest producer of soybeans in the U.S., and an estimated 20 percent of corn and soy sent to Cuba comes from Illinois farms, according to the Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Soybean Association.

Cuba imports about 80 percent of its food, regularly purchasing U.S. chicken, soy and corn. But the embargo prevents

the U.S. from buying Cuban goods, causing Illinois businesses to pay double when hiring cargo ships.

"Even though we have a close proximity to Cuba, our logistical advantage is diminished because the embargo does not allow us to bring backhauls from Cuba," said Mark Albertson, director of strategic market development at the Illinois Soybean Growers. "When the ships come back empty, it is like we are paying for freight twice."

Congress is considering legislation which would remove financial restrictions for agricultural products bound for Cuba. It would allow private U.S. agriculture businesses to offer credit to independent Cuban farmers instead of requiring the Cuban government to pay in cash before receiving a shipment. The embargo is often blamed for the U.S. being uncompetitive, in comparison with other countries which don't require Cuba to pay in cash.

"Illinois farmers are seeking a level playing field to be able to compete in global markets," Albertson said.

U.S. corn and soy exports to Cuba peaked in 2008 at \$331 million, roughly \$66 million of which is estimated to have come from Illinois, according to the Illinois Soybean Growers. Since then, U.S. corn

and soy exports dropped to approximately \$120 million in 2014, with Illinois' share being roughly \$24 million.

Parr Rosson, an economist at Texas A&M University, told the U.S. Senate in 2015 that U.S. agricultural exports to Cuba could exceed \$1 billion annually if trade regulations are loosened.

In 1999, former Gov. George Ryan led the first delegation to Cuba since the 1959 Revolution to help end the embargo and to encourage agricultural trade relations between Cuba and Illinois.

In 2013, the Illinois General Assembly called for an end to the embargo and created the Illinois Cuba Working Group (ICWG), an advocacy group whose mission is to strengthen trade relations with Cuba.

Paul Johnson, executive director of ICWG, said Illinois farmers have been pushing for more trade with Cuba for 20 years.

"They want to have a new relationship with Cuba," he said. ♦

Monica Stabile is an editorial intern at the Springfield Business Journal. She is pursuing her master's degree in Public Affairs Reporting at the University of Illinois Springfield.



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Remembering Mary Therese “M.T.” Vann

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

She grew up the only girl with five brothers. Maybe that was where Mary Therese Vann first learned to hold her own. Known as M.T. to many, Mary Therese Vann of Springfield died Dec. 31, 2016, leaving a respected legacy of making her own way in the worlds of business and social justice.

M.T. Vann was born July 28, 1961, to Bill and Theresa Vann of Springfield. She attended St. Agnes Grade School, Sacred Heart Academy and the University of Illinois. Most recently, she was known locally for starting a real estate firm, Prairie Property Solutions. However, M.T. was also a strong advocate for LGBTQ rights and animal rights, a generous philanthropist and a helping hand in times of need.

The Most Rev. Kevin Vann, who serves as bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange in California, is one of M.T. Vann’s five brothers. Unlike many people in Springfield, he still affectionately uses his sister’s full name instead of her initials. He also still remembers the night she was born into a family that already had four young boys. “We had gathered at my grandparents’ house,” he recalls. “My grandfather came in and said, ‘It’s a girl.’ My grandmother didn’t believe him. We were all boys at that point. It was just a wonderful thing.”

“Vann remembers Mary Therese as larger than life and as always having a heart full of gratitude. “She would do anything for anybody,” he said. “She would help all kinds of people on the margins of society.”

One of the things Vann admired most about his sister was her sacrifice in caring for their aging parents in the years before they died. The other siblings had moved around the country by that point, he said, so Mary Therese stepped up to help. Theresa Vann died in 2012, and Bill Vann died in 2014.

“She was really heroic helping Mom and Dad,” Vann said. “She never complained. She knew that they worked unselfishly for us. Family was really important to her.”

Vann notes that Mary Therese was committed to Springfield and took seriously the responsibility that comes with being part of a

well-known family. When something needed to be done, he said, Mary Therese was “not just words; she was words and action.”

“She was socially engaged and went out of her way to do things for other folks,” he said. “That kind of presence will be greatly missed.”

Jonna Cooley, executive director of the Phoenix Center in Springfield, met M.T. Vann around 2006. Cooley says she and Vann instantly became friends, in part because of their shared passion for LGBTQ issues. Vann soon joined the Phoenix Center’s board of directors and eventually served as board president for eight years and as an honorary board member afterward. Cooley says Vann never hid who she was, but rather embraced it. In doing so, Vann created space for others to be themselves.

“She said things other people wanted to say but couldn’t,” Cooley said. “She definitely opened doors for the LGBT community in Springfield. Cooley laughs as she recalls one of Vann’s well-known responses whenever someone approached her for help: “I’ve got a guy.”

“M.T. was the person everybody went to,” Cooley said. “If you had a great thing you were celebrating, you called M.T. because you wanted her to know. If you had a problem, you called M.T. because she would find you help. She would say, ‘I’ve got a guy,’ and she’d give you a name and number to call.”

Cooley praises Vann’s ability to stay cool, even during conflict. “No matter if you were in a frenzy, she was always pretty even,” Cooley said. “She would listen even if she was ticked off, and most of the time, you would walk away with an understanding. She could bridge gaps like no one else.”

John Kerstein was Vann’s business partner at Prairie Property Solutions, the residential real estate firm they created together in 2012. Kerstein says one of Vann’s best qualities was her ability to lead people “without them feeling like they were being led.” He admired Vann’s tenacity, drive and perseverance, but like many who knew her, he emphasizes her eagerness to help others.



PHOTO / COURTESY JOHN KERSTEIN

“M.T. touched countless lives,” he said, comparing to her St. Francis. “There was always somebody she was helping. That was her life’s mission.”

Springfield real estate agent Sam Perks met M.T. Vann when she invited him to join Prairie Property Solutions in 2015. Perks said he was instantly drawn to Vann’s charisma and trustworthiness.

“Whether it was a personal issue or a business issue, it didn’t matter — day or night — she was one person always I always knew I could count on,” he said, adding that he had planned to contact M.T. for advice just before her death.

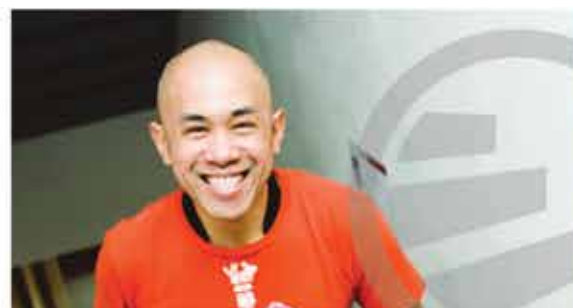
“It’s sobering to realize the void that now exists,” he said. “It’s easy to take for granted the people who are most capable in your life. Not having her here makes it even more apparent that she was one of the most capable people I ever met.”

A celebration of life service for Mary Therese Vann was held with more than 500 family members and friends in attendance on Jan. 6 at the Crowne Plaza. Donations in memorial may be sent to the Theresa Vann Scholarship Fund, c/o St. John’s Hospital, 800 E. Carpenter St., Springfield, IL 62702, or the Phoenix Center, 109 E. Lawrence Ave., Springfield, IL 62704. ♦



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Springfield's next big thing?

We can hope

BY DAVID A. KELM
Freelance Contributor

With the dawn of a new year in the capital city, it is difficult to believe that there are children being born to happy families who will never know a certain desire, a certain longing, their hopes dashed upon the jagged rocks of a sluggish economy. It is hard to fathom how difficult Springfield life was during the "interregnum," as I've heard it referred to in hushed tones in the halls of the city's Office of Planning and Economic Development Office. The long years in darkness are a memory for some, but like the Ides of March, should be a warning to those of us who are ready to believe that something better is always over the horizon. It is difficult to even write of the lost decades when our fair city on the prairie was without Chick-fil-A.

And now, it is occurring again. The rumors are swirling about something new and yet just out of reach. The legacy Springfield media has baited everyone's breath with unconfirmed, non-sourced reports that Springfield could be on "the list." Could Springfield be on the verge of an economic renaissance? Have you read about the technology company that might

be siting a new manufacturing facility with well-paying jobs? What about the new dirt work going on out at the outlet mall – seen that? Will the Springfield children's museum open this year?

Oh, ye reader of little vision. The scuttlebutt that has Springfield abuzz and more than slightly envious is that Portillo's Hot Dogs is coming to Bloomington-Normal and Champaign-Urbana. Oh. My. God. Chicago hot dogs with mustard, relish, onions, tomatoes, pickle spear, sport peppers, salt and pepper on a poppy seed bun. Really. All of that on a bun. Italian beef. Combos. Burgers. Didn't you hear me? Portillo's!

Forget about all the new pizza joints, although a lot of them are great. Don't try and tell me that one place has a hot dog that is just as good. There is no such thing as "just as good" when you're discussing Portillo's. And, please don't disrespect yourself and insult God's creation - Italian beef– by arguing that somebody with a slow-cooker, a handful of oregano and a hunk of beef roast knows the first thing about making a Portillo's Italian beef sandwich. In all honesty, I prefer the combo: Italian beef together with Italian sausage on a bun, the whole thing dipped in their brown gravy.

Let me head off a fight in the com-

ments section. Does Portillo's have the best Italian beef sandwich to come out of Chicagoland? My opinion is no. That honor falls to Johnnie's Beef in Elmwood Park. I know you've got your AI's #1 Italian Beef aficionados, your Joe Boston Italian Beef defenders and those who grew up with Buena Beef. For you millennials, yes, I'm sure there are great farm-to-table, handcrafted, organically raised and grown Italian beef sandwiches at some hole-in-the-wall, about-to-go-out-of-business neighborhood deli that cost \$12.50 and are "soooooo worth it," but this ain't that. We have to take what we get, amiright?

So, Portillo's it is. This fast food chain restaurant will be the tipping point, will carry Springfield to the next level of mid-size, Middle America cities. This is what will put us on par with the holier-than-thou academics in Champaign-Urbana. A hot dog stand from Chicago, right here in the home of Abraham Lincoln, will show those condescending Des Moinians (Des Moinesites?) what it's all about. And Terra Haute? Please. Those poor souls will still be living in a Grade A, USDA-certified Italian beef desert.

But again sweet Springfield, this is just another greasy dream. The rumors are still ephemeral, swirling around our fair

city by the lake, enticing and maddening at the same time. The newspaper and radio stations are calling and emailing Portillo's, desperate for the biggest scoop of the 21st century. Much like the bottom of our hearts, we all know Springfield is on the bottom of the list. We all just know Litchfield will probably beat us. They have a Jack in the Box, after all. Take a breath and remember: there will be months, if not years, of passing friends at work and asking, "Did you read about Portillo's in the paper? It could really happen this time." In the evening, when you pull into the garage, there in the headlights gathering dust will silently sit your fast food grand opening tent, sleeping bag and camp chair.

So, let the next Springfield fast food doomsday clock crank to life. When it gets to be too much though, remember we stood shoulder-to-shoulder waiting and praying for the resurrection of Chick-fil-A. Let us shake our fists at the fast food gods. Why have you deserted us? Are we not as deserving as those jerks in Normal? Why must my children go to bed without delicious, soggy Italian beef and crispy French fries? Why has Portillo's forsaken us? ♦

David A. Kelm is an attorney in private practice in Chatham.



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Professional Women's Calendar of Events
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Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL)

IWIL will hold a luncheon on Thursday, February 16 from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Sangamo Club. We've all heard about the importance of "buying local" and "living local" - but what does that really mean? How can your seemingly minor decisions build community *and* get you real value for your dollar? Hear Lisa Clemmons Scott of Downtown Springfield Inc. and Katie Davison of Innovate Springfield talk about the true impact and value of choosing to *live, work and play* in the heart of the city. Cost is \$18 for advance registration or \$23 at the door. Register at www.iwil.biz.

Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois (WE-CI)

WE-CI will hold its monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 8 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Casa Real, 3100 W. White Oaks Dr. Any business owners, nonprofit, executive directors, senior corporate managers, or students looking to become a business owner are invited to our new member drive. The cost for this meeting will be \$20 for members, FREE for guests. Additional information about this event is available by contacting Stephanie McDannald at Emersonpress@comcast.net. Reservations are required for this event. We ask that you pre-register on our website or RSVP by February 3 to reservations@we-ci.org, or reserve a spot online at www.we-ci.org.

Association for Women in Communications (AWC)

AWC will hold a luncheon Wednesday, February 8 from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Sangamo Club. The speaker will be Judith Valente, an award-winning print and broadcast journalist, poet and author. Her talk will be on "The Art of Pausing: Reclaiming a Sense of Balance in Our Lives." She'll also be available to autograph her books. For more information or to make a reservation, visit www.awcspRINGfield.org.

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To have your event added to the Women's Calendar of Events, please fax your information to 217-753-2281 or e-mail to info@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

FDIC

EPA report critical of fracking

BY MONICA STABILE
Editorial Intern

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a report critical of hydraulic fracturing in December, cautiously saying "fracking" can pose a danger to drinking water under some circumstances. However, the report may not matter for Illinois any time soon because economic factors have essentially stopped fracking here.

Hydraulic fracturing is a process that that involves injecting a mixture of water, sand and chemicals at high pressure into shale formations to extract oil or natural gas. High-volume hydraulic fracturing—which means the use of 300,000 gallons or more of fluid during the fracking process — is regulated under state law, whereas smaller operations are exempt. Fracking is controversial because critics say it can cause environmental problems such as air pollution, damage to water resources and earthquakes.

To produce its report, the U.S. EPA conducted five case studies at hydraulic fracturing sites across the country which had received complaints about the appearance, smell and taste of the water from the local wells. The study found that the quality of the drinking water located near the fracking production wells "ranged in severity, from temporary changes in water quality to contamination that made private drinking wells unusable."

However, the EPA is uncertain of how severe the impact is on the drinking water due to data gaps.

"EPA's assessment provides the scientific foundation for local decision makers, industry, and communities that are looking to protect public health and drinking water resources and make more informed decisions about hydraulic fracturing activities," said Dr. Thomas Burke, EPA's science advisor and deputy assistant administrator. According to the EPA, fracking can affect drinking water through water withdrawals in areas with scant supply, chemical spills leaking into water resources, releases of inadequately treated wastewater and storage of wastewater in unlined pits that can leech into groundwater.

Tabitha Tripp of Southern Illinoisans Against Fracturing Our Environment (SAFE) thinks the EPA report didn't do enough to address potential long-term potential risks that fracking may have on the environment and human health.

"The EPA only looked at the health impact, not at the number of chemicals they use to frack," Tripp said.

The American Petroleum Institute (API), an industry lobbying group, also condemned the new EPA report, calling it an "abandonment of science."

"Fortunately, the science and data clearly demonstrate that hydraulic

fracturing does not lead to widespread, systemic impacts to drinking water resources," API Upstream director Erik Milito said in a press release. In 2013, Illinois passed what was considered the most restrictive fracking legislation in the country, mandating that fracking companies perform water tests before, during and after fracking. Companies also must report the type of chemicals that will be pumped underground. Under Illinois law, fracking companies must apply for a permit, register with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), attend public hearings and test well sites before they may begin drilling.

Prior to the current set of regulations, Illinois didn't regulate fracking. After the regulations were approved in 2014, oil prices dropped from roughly \$100 per barrel to \$50 per barrel, resulting in the fracking industry skidding to a halt in Illinois. IDNR had no pending permit applications as of Oct. 4, 2016, and had approved no permits as of Feb. 17, 2016.

Mark Denzler of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, thinks Illinois was too late to hop on the oil bandwagon before oil prices crashed, and now fracking in the Illinois Basin isn't economically feasible. With Illinois having the strongest fracking law in the nation, Denzler said the fracking industry could have brought jobs to Illinois while taking the necessary safety precautions to extract its oil and natural gas.

"Fracking is a great economic resource for our country," he added.

Proponents of fracking argue that drilling for oil and natural gas promote business and job growth by keeping the domestic product and limiting imports of oil and gas from other countries. Those against the use of fracking argue that it poses a hazard to the environment and human health because faulty wells could lead to the contamination of underground water resources. That could pose a danger to residents who use water wells that are further than 1,500 feet from a high-volume fracking site. The fracking industry in Illinois is legally required to test water wells that are within 1,500 feet of a high-volume fracking site.

SAFE recommends residents who live anywhere within 1.5 miles away from a high-volume fracking area should also test their water because horizontal well bores may extend that far in any direction. A baseline mineral test conducted by the Illinois State Water Survey can cost between \$35 and \$65 dollars, while a basic chemical test can cost hundreds of dollars, depending on the testing facility. Tripp said many residents in southern Illinois can't afford to pay for a chemical test each year, which she said could lead to unchecked contamination in drinking water wells.

Read the EPA report online at epa.gov/hfstudy. ♦

The business of art: Mehr Tumulty

BY ROBERTA CODEMO
Freelance Contributor

Mehr Tumulty says he wouldn't be alive if he didn't have his art. It enables him to work through his feelings of anxiety and depression. "Art helps me cope," he said. "It's my voice."

A large part of his spirit lives in his paintings, which are very dark and feature creatures without mouths and often make people uncomfortable when they look at them. People often tell him they would like his work more if it was happier, but "that's not the point," he said. His work represents how he feels, and he relates to the figures in his paintings.

"There's something personable about the figures," he said. "They take on a life of their own." His favorite piece is "Portrait of a Weary Spirit."

A Springfield native, he was raised in a strict, conservative Lutheran household, which had a strong effect on his life. Even today, "it's hard for me to love myself," he said.

"He started painting at a young age and remembers painting a picture of blueberries and strawberries on a vine for his dad on a piece of printer paper.

"Each one had a different face," he said. "My dad still has it."

Among his early influences were the children's television show "Secret City" and Bob Ross' "The Joy of Painting."

"He stressed that everybody paints

differently," he said. "It's very individual."

He also credits his instructors, Scott and Tracy Snowman at Spoon River College in Canton, and Clare Lynd-Porter, formerly with Imagine Art in Jacksonville, with mentoring him.

"She helped me find my voice," he says of Porter.

He terms his style of painting "tumultism," and likes the fact that the word "tumult" means violent upheaval or confusion.

"It works well with the style of art I create," he said.

Tumulty works in acrylics, charcoal and ink and usually starts with a vague idea. The act of putting something on canvas for him is a release.

"It's not just about painting something, but controlling the feeling," he said.

When he's working, it's important to set the atmosphere – he must wear shoes, the space must be tidy, there must be music, and he needs good lighting.

"I fall into a meditative state when I'm working," he said.

Tumulty has a nine-year-old son, Elliott. "It's just me and him," Tumulty said, adding being a parent is one of the most difficult and challenging things one can imagine. "He keeps me healthy." ♦

Mehr Tumulty's work is available at The Roost in downtown Springfield, the Hoogland Center for the Arts gallery and on his website at www.tumultism.com.

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PHOTOS / COURTESY OF MEHR TUMULTY

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Dome of the Capitol

State budget crisis hobbles commercial construction

BY MONICA STABILE
Editorial Intern

The Illinois budget crisis has caused a slump in the commercial construction industry, thanks in part to deferred maintenance and building projects by state and local governments.

Nearing two years without a state budget, many state-owned buildings are in desperate need of maintenance and repair. The budget impasse has burdened the already cash-strapped public universities and prisons, and the maintenance backlog is estimated at more than \$6 billion.

Without proper funding, many state facilities have had to deal with crumbling infrastructure with no adequate funding in sight. A report released by the Governor's Office of Management and Budget said funding would be prioritized for facilities that run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Still, Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln needs an estimated \$15 million to help improve security, electrical work and roof repairs. It's one of several such cases.

The report showed that the Department of Corrections "has the highest deferred maintenance backlog of any state agency with over \$1.6 billion in needs for fiscal year 2017."

Rick Lawrence, president of construction firm Siciliano Inc., said Illinois hasn't had a construction budget in years.

"Maintenance hasn't been done on anything," he said. "Everything is just getting worse and worse and worse."

A report released by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability showed that the Capital Development Board, which oversees state building projects, requested \$410 million in new funding for fiscal year 2017. About \$300 million of that would be funneled to state facilities for critical maintenance. The DOC would use \$100 million to update correctional facilities.

Roger Huebner, director of labor relations for the Central Illinois Builders of AGC, says lack of funding also has prevented school districts and state universities from investing in major projects. Schools are not doing the normal type of construction projects, but

are instead focusing on smaller projects like heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

Schools are worried that they may not receive state funding for renovations because they need to make sure they can pay their vendors and people on their payroll, Hueber added.

A report released by the Illinois Board of Higher Education in December showed the backlogged maintenance projects at state universities and community colleges was estimated to be over \$4 billion in 2016.

The IBHE said that most university buildings are built to last for more than 100 years, but major renovations and repairs are needed to maintain the buildings' life expectancies. With poor maintenance and lack of funding, university buildings will not last as long as they were meant to last, the IBHE said. The majority of buildings at Western Illinois University, for example, are between 50 and 59 years of age and require critical repairs in order to keep up with proper building standards.

Without funding to build new facilities,

universities are faced with crowded classrooms to meet enrollment capacity. To help generate revenue, universities are charging higher tuition and fees, affecting affordability for students.

The State Board of Education reports that there have been fewer schools applying for school construction projects because of insufficient funding available, with only four applications in fiscal year 2015. That's compared to 87 applications just 10 years earlier in 2005.

Since fiscal year 2010, there has been no new funding designated for school construction grant programs, according to an analysis by the Commission on Government Forecasting and Analysis, a bipartisan state legislative group.

"The need in the School Construction program outweighs what the state can afford," CGFA said. ♦

Monica Stabile is an editorial intern at the Springfield Business Journal. She is pursuing her master's degree in Public Affairs Reporting at the University of Illinois

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SPOTLIGHT



PHOTO / COURTESY OF O'SHEA BUILDERS

JON FEEKES

TITLE:	senior estimator, O'Shea Builders
EDUCATION:	M.S. in building construction from Auburn University
FAMILY:	Wife – Heather; Children – Jane and Tess
FAVORITES:	Hobby: Playing Soccer; Movie: National Treasure; Resturant: TGI Friday's
TIDBITS:	Avid reader who loves leadership books; wants to hike the Appalachian Trail; serves on the board of Goodwill Industries

BY ERIC WOODS
Freelance Contributor

Born in a small town in northwest Iowa, Jon Feekes has come a long way since his days as a paperboy and corn detasseler as a young kid. Although he did enjoy the paper route, he says the detasseling job was very unpleasant.

"It was early in the morning, it was cold, and you got all scratched up," he said.

Feekes moved to Springfield four years ago after a decade in St. Louis. He says he's happy living in the capital city, where he is senior estimator at O'Shea Builders.

"I really like the community," he said. "My wife's parents and her brother live here, the amenities are great, and it is a good place to raise a family."

Growing up in a small town, Feekes enjoyed playing soccer, baseball, and basketball, and he was always interested in design. He wanted to be a builder or an artist.

Four years ago, his career brought him to Springfield to work as an estimator at O'Shea Builders.

"We work with clients so they can have a confident decision on what they want to build," Feekes said.

O'Shea has stayed busy, according to Feekes, thanks to the company's focus on relationships with clients. That has helped the company through the lean economic conditions brought on by the state budget crisis.

If he could look into the future, Feekes says he would like to see what direction the nation takes. Closer to home, Feekes would like to see Springfield's downtown

continue to develop. He is also very curious about the future of Illinois.

"I would like to see Illinois put together a budget and make progress," he said. "The state has so much to offer. We do not want to see people leaving Illinois."

His personal future is at O'Shea, as Feekes doesn't see himself leaving any time soon.

"I enjoy the opportunities here," he said. "I like working in a team environment and building relationships with our clients."

Feekes has learned a number of life lessons and has been given some great advice over the course of his lifetime. He cites his grandmother as one source of solid advice. She frequently recited the Bible verse Proverbs 3:5-6, which implores the reader to trust in God.

"It's a good one," he said, adding that he has learned to always be honest, do the right thing, and stand up for what you believe in. "Just give the best in all you do, and do the right thing."

Feekes says that for anyone interested in joining the construction industry, experience in the field is a necessity – whether it's building a house or working as a plumber or electrician.

"Having the opportunity to learn how things are built is invaluable," he said.

Currently, Feekes has a number of big projects under development, including at Memorial Medical Center, St. John's Hospital and the governor's mansion in Springfield.

"I am excited about the Executive Mansion," he said, "and seeing that renovated and showcased for the people of Illinois. ♦



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Firefighter creates business saving wood

BY NAOMI VELAZQUEZ GREENE
Freelance Contributor

This is part of a series of profiles on businesses and organizations pursuing environmentally sustainable projects and activities in and around Springfield.

Brian Frieze has been a firefighter for 13 years – five with the City of Springfield and eight as a military firefighter. When he’s not putting out fires, his creative passion includes saving and reclaiming wood to repurpose it into furniture or other creations.

Frieze started his wood working business, Sangamon Reclaimed, quite by chance.

“There was a neighbor next to the family farm in Indiana with a barn in disrepair,” he said. “He was getting ready to bulldoze it when I explained that there was a market for barn wood.”

The barn’s owner let Frieze dismantle it and keep the wood. That was the beginning of his efforts, which sprouted into a business.

“We started selling the wood on Craigslist and to wholesalers for a couple of years, said Frieze. “Then we started moving toward a retail operation and making furniture.”

Thus, Sangamon Reclaimed was born. At first, they started making a few pieces of furniture for friends and family – small tables

and dining tables. The first item he made was a coffee table for his wife. As people started seeing them, the demand for their products grew, pushing Frieze to expand into other products and services.

“We build things like fireplace mantles. Sliding barn doors are a big thing right now,” says Frieze.

And they’ve been growing from there. Commercial enterprises such as small restaurants and coffee shops are creating their own demand. Sangamon Reclaimed has already created furniture or products for Bunn and Custom Cup Coffee in Springfield as well as Spirit Republic and Sheedy Shores Winery in Lincoln. Currently, they’re making tables for Free Press Coffee, a coffee shop based out of Pittsfield that is getting ready to open additional locations in Springfield on Toronto Road and MacArthur Boulevard.

In addition to furniture, Sangamon Reclaimed is involved in residential and commercial build outs. These typically include building tables or creating feature walls.

According to Frieze, each reclaimed building material provides a variety of creative opportunities because the wood is always different. Recently, a local nurse contracted Sangamon Reclaimed to create a table out of wood saved from a family farm house built in the 1800s.

“She brought two pillars from the farm

house,” Frieze said. “We used those for the corner posts and finished with our material. It was a surprise for her mom, and it was really cool to see her reaction to it.”

One of the most unique projects Frieze and his crew created led to a new and interesting aspect of their business. After dismantling an old church building near Waverly, Frieze says they created a report on the church. Since then, they’ve started doing research and write-ups on the history of each of the old barns or structures. Now, whenever someone purchases a piece of furniture, Sangamon Reclaimed includes a write up on the source of the wood and a picture of the building on a postcard.

In addition to furniture, Sangamon

Reclaimed sells smaller items such as picture or painting frames, pre-framed creations of the U.S. flag, and for Cub fans, a wood creation of the team’s win flag “W.”

For its work on repurposing wood, as well as creating an appreciation for discarded materials, Sustainable Springfield recognized Sangamon Reclaimed, along with other local business, in 2016. Sangamon Reclaimed received the organization’s “Best Use of Recyclable Materials” award.

Sangamon Reclaimed is located at 2710 S. 13th Street in Springfield. Find them online at sangamonreclaimed.com. ♦



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1	United Contractors Midwest, Inc. 3151 Robbins Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-6192 217-546=1904 ucm.biz contact@ucm.biz	170	Robert Bruner, Pres; Mike Cullinan, Chairman	Asphalt Paving, Concrete Paving, Bridge Building, Earthwork	15	I-55 overlay from Lincoln north to McClean County line; Widen Route 29 to four lanes between Springfield-Rochester-Taylorville; Wabash Ave. new construction adding lanes, asphalt paving, and earthwork; 1-55 resurfacing north of the Lake Springfield bridge to Southwind Road.	2001
2	O'Shea Builders 3401 Constitution Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-522-2826 888-930=2009 osheabuilders.com mikeoshea@osheabuilders.com	145	Michael E. O'Shea, Pres; David L. "Bud" O'Shea, CEO	Design-Build, Construction Management, General Contracting, Pre-Construction Services, Remodels, Additions and Maintenance	70	Illinois: Memorial Medical Center Expansion Project, Springfield Clinic 1st North, Brandt Consolidated Building Addition, Passavant Area Hospital, Abraham Lincoln Memorial Hospital, Taylorville Memorial Medical Center, Kerasotes Branch of the Springfield YMCA/Sportscare, Matheny-Withrow Elementary School, Springfield Pepsi Bottling Co., Central Illinois Foodbank, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Restoration Project, Orthopedic Center of Illinois.	1902
3	Halverson Construction Co., Inc. 620 N. 19th St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-753-0027 217-753=1904 halversonconstruction.com stevenh@halversonconstruction.com	80	Steven Halverson, Pres; Larry Antonacci, VP; Kyle Zellers, VP;	Gen. Contracting, Bridges, Commercial/ Industrial Construction, Const Mgt, Steel Erection, Pre-Cast	30	Illinois: A. Lincoln Presidential Library Parking Garage, Union Station Restoration, MacArthur Blvd Highway Bridges/Interchange/Extension, St. Joseph Home Dementia Wing Addn., Erin's Pavilion, Motomart Convenience Store Gas Station, SMTD - Springfield Mass Transit District, Camp Lincoln, Renovate Jacksonville High School, IHoP, CEFCU, County Market (2nd & Carpenter), PCCC phase 2&3.	1978
4	Mid-Illinois Companies 1700 E. Clear Lake Springfield, IL 62703	217-685-5486 217-679=4942 mic123.com info@mic123.com	65	Debra Young, Dennis Higdon, Bobby Taylor	Interior Contractor, commercial painting, air weather barriers systems, dry wall and dry wall finishing, fire stopping, fire proofing and bead blasting.	0	Interior Systems at: Memorial Medical Center, St. John's Hospital; Fire stopping at Springfield Clinic, Fire proofing at SIU; shot blasting at Pleasant Plains High School; Metal stud framing at Chatham schools.	1970
5	Jones-Blythe Construction Company 1030 W. Reynolds St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-787-1640 217-787=1666 jones-blythe.com jblythe@jones-blythe.com	60	John F. Blythe	Design-Build, Gen Contractor, Construction Management, Industrial Construction	60	Spfld, Ill.: Springfield, IL: St. John's Hospital, Memorial Medical Center. Illinois: Enbridge Pipeline	1930
6	Sangamo Construction 2100 E. Moffat Springfield, IL 62702	217-544-9871 217-544=9873 sangamo.net office@sangamo.net	50	Allan Reyhan, Jr.; Matthew P. Reyhan	Bridge/ Highway Construction	20	I-74 10 structures overlay, Spfld: Ridge Ave. HSRR crossing, East Lake Shore structure rehab, US 50 three structures rehab; IL 15 structure rehab	1990
7	R. D. Lawrence Construction Co. Ltd. 603 N. Amos Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-787-1384 217-787=3856 rdlawrence.com info@rdlawrence.com	45	John Goetz	General, Contracting, Design-Build, Commercial, Industrial, Restorations, Remodels, Additions	60	Illinois Secretary of State Room 212 Renovation, Lincoln High Speed Rail Station Restoration, Dept. of Military Affairs - IMA Auditorium Renovation, Mt. Pulaski Courthouse, Taylorville C.U.S.D. Schools, Jacksonville Middle School.	1984
8	Newman-Alton Inc. 719 Estill Drive Springfield, IL 62707	217-753-1986 217-753=1988 salton@newman-alton.com	25	Patrick Newman; Steve Alton	General Contractors, Non-Union Construction Management, Design-Build	40	Party City Remodel, Floyd Imports, Williamsville Library, Blessing Hospital, Blackburn College, Free Press Coffee	1992
9	Evans Construction 1900 E. Washington St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-525-1456 217-525=2886 evansconst.com don@evansconst.com	20	Donald Evans, Pres.	General Contracting, Construction Management, Design / Build, Commercial / Industrial Construction	60	Springfield: Memorial Medical Center, KEB New Office, AT&T Renovations, Taylorville: Memorial Hospital, St Mary's School Addition, Jacksonville: Jacksonville Middle School, Quincy: Insurance Office Renovations	1913
9	Siciliano Inc. 3601 Winchester Road Springfield, IL 62707	217-585-1200 217-585=1211 sicilianoinc.com buildit@sicilianoinc.com	20	Richard E. Lawrence, Pres; Aubrie Megginson, CFO; Kim Lawrence, Sec.	General Contractor, Historical Restoration, Design-Build, Commercial/Industrial Construction, Site Work	15	Historical restoration Booth-Bateman/Kennedy-Ferguson Building downtown Springfield, IL; AMEREN Services – Multiple projects throughout state; State Retirement Systems new security upgrades.	1968



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St. John's Hospital prepares to build \$48m facility on Ninth Street



St. John's Hospital from Ninth Street

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

HSHS St. John's Hospital in Springfield is drawing closer to building a new facility along Ninth Street, focusing on women's and children's health.

The hospital's plans received a favorable vote at a land use meeting on Jan. 5, and a state oversight board is slated to consider the plans in March.

The proposal is for a new four-story, 85,500-square-foot building and a parking garage on the east side of Ninth Street, across from the existing hospital. The new facility would house medical offices for St. John's and SIU School of Medicine, with a focus on care for women and children. The estimated cost is \$48.3 million.

On Jan. 5, the Land Subdivision Committee of the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission

voted to recommend approval of the project, subject to a handful of minor document revisions. The committee's vote, while nonbinding, means the project will be recommended favorably to the Springfield City Council for final land use approval.

Chris Campbell, vice president and strategy officer for the Central Illinois Division of HSHS, says projects of this size require plenty of planning, and other governmental bodies must approve the plans before construction can begin. One is the Illinois Health Facilities Review Board, a state agency which evaluates the need for new health facilities. Campbell says HSHS submitted its application for review to the board in December. The board issued a notice on Dec. 29 that the application was deemed complete – a feat in itself since the application spans 100 pages. A hearing to consider the

application is scheduled for March 14.

Campbell says the new facility will allow HSHS St. John's Hospital to consolidate its scattered offices for women's and children's health, with inpatient appointments at the existing hospital and outpatient appointments at the new facility. A climate-controlled pedestrian bridge over Ninth Street would connect the new building with the existing Carol Jo Vecchie Women's Center.

"Our end goal is a good patient experience," Campbell said.

A new parking structure would be built to the north of the new building, initially replacing an existing surface parking lot with two floors of parking. Two additional floors of parking could be added later. An existing surface parking lot to the south of the new building's site would remain unchanged.

Campbell says that if all of the

necessary approvals are obtained, construction could start this summer and last about a year, meaning the new building could be in use some time in the summer of 2018.

"Our end goal is a good patient experience."

He adds that HSHS is being careful not to harm any potential archaeological remains from the 1908 race riot which may exist along the 10th Street rail corridor.

"We are absolutely committed to being respectful of that entire process and that aspect of the property," he said. ♦



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Industrial services company expands to Midwest via Springfield

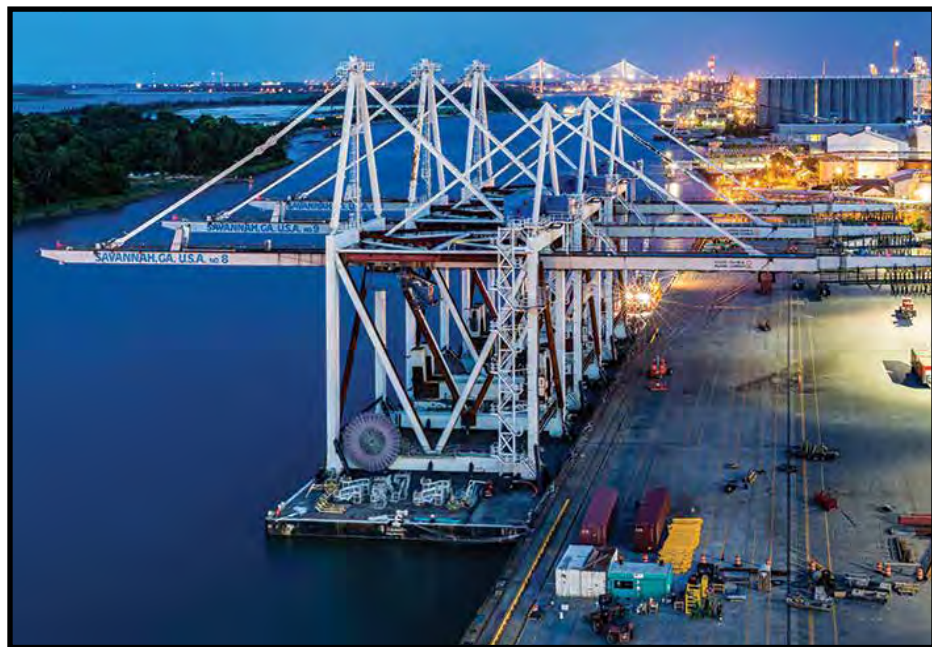


PHOTO / COURTESY OF INDUSTRIAL AND CRANE SERVICES, INC.

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

An industrial services company based in Mississippi is opening a Springfield office as it seeks to reach the entire Midwest.

Industrial and Crane Services, Inc. was founded in 2003 and is headquartered in Pascagoula, Mississippi. The Springfield office was established late last year.

Jon Brent, project manager and structural engineer with Industrial and Crane Services, says the company chose Springfield because of its location.

"As the demand for utilizing the inland waterways as a means of moving goods grows," Brent said, "Springfield's proximity to all the Midwest waterways and Great Lakes makes it ideal for quickly

serving the industry."

Brent's role in the Springfield office is partly managing projects and providing structural engineering support, but he'll also help develop Industrial and Crane Services' client base in the Midwest and investigate new markets. He says the Springfield office will initially employ three to five people, but up to 20 people could eventually be employed here, based on project specifics.

Industrial and Crane Services provides engineering and surveying, transportation of heavy items, port crane services and more. One of the company's focuses is transporting and assembling large cranes serving the maritime industry. The company also has offices in Indianapolis, Savannah and League City, Texas. ♦

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1	Anderson Electric, Inc. 3501 Sixth St. Hwy. W., Suite #1 Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-5471 217-529-0412 anderson-electric.com wesa@anderson-electric.com	200	Employee Owned	Yes	SIU Simmon's Cancer Center, Porta High School - Wind Turbine Project, Illinois Primary Healthcare, Concordia Village various projects, White Oaks Mall rehab, First United Methodist Church, SMTD, St. John's Hospital reroute systems and demo, Spring Creek Water Treatment Plant, CWLP contract 3 pump stations, Passavant Hospital medical office building, Meijer renovation, Ball Elementary addition - Chatham, Memorial Medical Center surgery expansion & patient care tower.	1918
2	B & B Electric, Inc. 3000 Reilly Drive Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-9666 217-528-5481 bnbelectric.net todd@bnbelectric.net	88	Todd M. Brinkman, Tim Brinkman	Yes	Springfield: State Capitol / Supreme Court / PCCC renovations, Kindred Healthcare, Memorial Medical Center, Springfield Clinic First - North, St. John's Sixth St. - Lincolnshire, New Orthopedic Center, LLCC - Workforce Center, Prairie Diagnostic Center, New Vision Care, Sacred Heart-Griffin addition, YMCA, Glenwood Elementary School; Lincoln: A. Lincoln Memorial Hospital and Office Building; Jacksonville: Passavant Hospital; Taylorville: Taylorville Memorial Hospital, Medical Office Building, MMC- Learning Center, Altorfer, and Calvary Church.	1962
3	Egizii Electric 3009 Singer Ave. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-4001 217-528-1677 eeiholding.com kpaoni@eeiholding.com	71	Robert W. Egizii	Yes	Dallman Generating Station (CWLP) President Abraham Lincoln Museum, Kennedy Space Center, Boeing Aircraft, Wilkes Barre, Prairie Power Service Contract, Ameren Service Contract, MSM Service Contract, Washington Park Bridge Replacement, Litchfield Airport, Quincy Airport, Veteran's Parkway Rehab, Wabash Avenue Widening, Meredosia Bridge, Mt. Sterling Municipal Airport, Carlinville Shipman Blacktop, Dirksen Parkway Signals, Standford Avenue Signals, Morton Avenue Signals, State of Illinois Electrical Maintenance, IDOR Security Integrator, Bright New day Investments, UIS Data Center, Senate Hearing Room 212, Logan Correctional Center – Hi Voltage, Lincoln High Speed Rail, CWLP Facility Improvements, CWLP Igniter Construction	1948
4	Ryan Electrical Solutions 1305 W. Enos Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-698-4877 217-698-8481 ryanelectricalsolutions.com dennis@ryanelectricalsolutions.com	30	Dennis Ryan	No	Various Commercial, Residential and Audio Visual Projects. Agriculture. Back-up and portable generator sales, installation and services.	1995
5	Ruby Electric 341 S. Meadowbrook Road Springfield, IL 62711	217-787-4949 217-787-2043 rubyelectric.com johnruby@rubyelectric.com	25	John Ruby	No	Various Commercial and Residential Projects, Standby Generator Systems Commercial and Residential.	1978
6	Lindsey Electric 3260 Terminal Ave. Springfield, IL 62707	217-544-6789 217-544-9591 lindsey-electric.com lori@lindsey-electric.com	12	Catherine A. Lindsey - pres., J. Michael Lindsey - v.p., Lori A. Lindsey Von Behren - corp. sec.	Yes	Various Commercial & Residential Projects.	1972
7	Jim Watts Electric 2801 E. Sangamon Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-652-9950 www.jimwattselectric.com wattselectric1@yahoo.com	11	Jim Watts	No	Various residential and commercial, generators, audio/visual, security systems	2011
8	Mansfield Electric Co. 4425 N. Peoria Road Springfield, IL 62702	217-523-0811 217-528-3111 ed@mansfield-electric.com	10	H. Edward Midden, III	Yes	Sangamon County Complex, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, UIS - University Hall, The Bridge Short Stay Nursing Home, Enos Elementary School, Hy-Vee.	1949
8	Prairie State Plumbing & Heating 3900 N. Peoria Road Springfield, IL 62702	217-636-9000 217-636-8927	10	Jerry Judd	Yes	Virginia School District, Springfield Pepsi, LRS, SIU School of Medicine, Brown County Schools, Illinois Veterans' Home, Springfield Metro Sanitary District, IDOT Warehouse buildings.	
9	Carmean Electric Inc. 2863 Singer Ave. Springfield, IL 62703	(217) 789-1155 (217) 789-9578 carmeanelectricofspringfield.com carmeanelectric@gmail.com	5	Wayne Shephard	Yes	Various Residential and Commercial projects. 24-hour emergency service, maintenance, new wiring, re-wiring, utility work, solar design and installation, LED lighting.	1970



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Having a tiff about TIF

BY THOMAS C. PAVLIK
Freelance Contributor

Between the surveyor's museum, the former Methodist church downtown, the YWCA, and Enos Park, everyone seems to be in a tiff about TIF. There have been many discussions lately among the aldermen and the general public about the most appropriate use of these funds.

First, a bit of history to put everything in perspective.

The first tax-increment financing (TIF) district was created in 1952 in California in order to provide matching funds for then-prevalent federal urban renewal programs. As those programs declined in the 1970s, cities throughout the country started looking for ways to help fund urban redevelopment. And as federal funding virtually dried up in the late 1970s and 1980s, policy wonks started focusing on TIF as a method of funding urban development without raising taxes, without requiring a popular vote and without affecting a city's debt limits.

All states, with the exception of Arizona, offer some version of TIF, and Illinois adopted it in 1977. The legislative record indicates that the impetus behind the bill was to find a mechanism to fund development in blighted urban centers in light of a lack of federal funding.

"There is no federal money available," said

Sen. Howard Carroll, a Democrat from Chicago, during legislative debate on the TIF bill in June 1976. "There is no private development money available, and the reason is because we have some blighted or near blighted structures in our urban centers that are decaying, that nobody can afford in today's market to buy those structures, demolish them and rebuild those urban centers."

Generally, TIF is a method of generating funds that can be used to attract new business to a designated area via government funding of infrastructure improvements (such as roads and sewers) and other direct incentives to private developers.

TIF districts can only be created in geographical areas that meet certain criteria, usually physical or economic problems. Although perhaps an unfortunate way of describing it, the most common TIF districts meet the federal definition of "blighted" areas. Census data is used to determine if the area meets a certain number of criteria that makes it "detrimental" to public safety, health or the welfare of the community, or that impairs growth. TIF districts can also be created for "conservation" areas that must satisfy different, but somewhat similar, standards.

Before an area can become a TIF district, the local municipality has to answer what seems like a simple question: Will private investment occur but

for the incentives provided by TIF financing? If the answer is yes, then TIF financing is unavailable. If the answer is no, TIF financing is available.

The process for creating a TIF district, and in the process answering that question, is very similar to how an ordinance is passed. Studies are conducted (known as a Redevelopment Plan), the public and local taxing bodies are invited to provide input, and then the proposal is put to a vote by the municipality's governing body. Significantly, the Redevelopment Plan also sets forth the budget for how to allocate the funds available to the TIF district. The whole process is governed by a state law known as the Illinois Tax Increment Allocation Redevelopment Act.

Under that law, TIF funds can be spent on a wide variety of incentives and improvements. Funds can be used to acquire or rehabilitate real property, to provide financing, to fund roads and sewers and other public works, to pay for professional services usually associated with development, to pay for job retraining and even for day care.

However, there are also things that TIF cannot be used to pay for. Paying down the city's pension obligations would not be a permitted use, for example. TIF is also not allowed for new construction, although some "soft costs" like architecture and engineering fees can be covered.

Where do the funds come from to pay for

all those costs? In short, those funds come from property tax revenues. True to its name, the funds come from something known as a "tax increment." A tax increment is the difference between property tax revenues before creation of a TIF district and property tax revenue generated after a TIF district is designated. All property taxes that were collected prior to TIF designation continue to be collected and distributed according to law (generally to school districts, park districts and counties) as if the TIF were never created. However, one major assumption of a TIF district is that property values will increase due to new development and the businesses that will be attracted, and the increase in property values will translate into increased property tax revenue. Those property tax revenues resulting from enhanced real estate values are then available for use in the TIF district.

Of course, if the property's tax obligation is reduced or even eliminated, the amount of money going into the coffers is reduced accordingly. Although legally permissible, the practice has lately been generating controversy in Springfield with the city's purchase of the YWCA block and the recent proposal to buy the Surveyor's Museum building at 521 E. Washington St., which would remove both properties from the tax rolls.

In any event, funds from the tax increment are then made available to developers and businesses

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The YWCA is soon to be demolished.

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



The defunct National Museum of Surveying on Washington Street

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

that plan to move to or do business in the TIF district. In Springfield, for instance, funds are directly available, among other things, for lease assistance to businesses who will rent property in the area and for building rehabilitation costs.

TIF funds may also be used directly by the municipality – whether to fund infrastructure improvements or for the direct acquisition or demolition of real property, as in the surveyor's museum or YWCA, respectively. Whether either use is a good idea may be open to debate, but both are within the scope of permissible uses of TIF dollars, according to the state statute.

Because it can often take some time for those increased property taxes to materialize, state law allows municipalities to issue bonds. Revenues from the bonds are typically used to pay for up-front development costs and incentives, with the

bonds subsequently paid off using portions of the increased tax revenues. In practice, however, the more recent TIF districts in Springfield have eschewed the issuance of bonds.

By law, TIF districts expire after 23 years, although they can be renewed for an additional 12 years if approved by the General Assembly. Upon expiration, all tax revenues, including the increases used to fund the TIF, become available to the taxing body. Also, if no redevelopment occurs within seven years of the creation of the TIF district, the district must terminate by law. That being said, extensions can be granted by the Illinois General Assembly. The Central Area TIF district in downtown Springfield was created in 1981, was extended by 12 years once before, and was recently extended again by the legislature for another 12 years, making it the first in the state to receive a second

extension.

TIF financing is prevalent throughout the state. One report indicated that 30 percent of downtown Chicago is in a TIF district, while the Office of the Illinois Comptroller says there are 1,413 TIF districts throughout the state. Who knew there was so much blight?

Springfield has had a total of 10 different TIF districts, although only eight are currently active. The former Fiat Allis complex was successfully redeveloped into Park South, a mix of Class A office space and retail locations, before the TIF expired in 2012. The Near North Crossing TIF, a tiny sliver at the corner of North Grand Avenue and Fifth Street, saw construction of a new shopping center, but the anchor tenant, Aldi, left in 2013. That space, along with several others, remains vacant, and the center has fallen into disrepair since the TIF expired.

All of this begs a couple of questions: Does TIF financing actually spur redevelopment? Has it strayed from its original purpose of removing blight in urban centers? Even if permitted by the letter of the law, should it be used by municipalities to compete with private business, especially when a city itself polices its own use of TIF funds? There are studies and reports to support pretty much any desired answer. These questions need to be resolved at the city level once and for all, or the controversy will be revived with every new project. ♦

Thomas C. Pavlik is an attorney with Delano Law Offices LLC in Springfield.

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Sources: The Unions.
Ranked by number of local members.

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1	International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local Union 916	3361 Teamster Way Springfield, IL 62707	217-522-7932 217-522-9492 teamsters916.org lisa@teamsters916.org	4,057	Tony Barr, President	10	1943
2	Local 477 LIUNA Laborers	1615 N. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-0014 217-522-0090 local477.com	1,500	Brad Schaive, Business Manager; Kirk Kellus, Secretary Treasurer	7	1903
3	International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 965	3520 E. Cook St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-9659 217-528-9060 iuoe965.org operators@comcast.net	1,400	Dennis R. Minick, Business Manager	15	1931
3	United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local No. 270	211 W. Lawrence Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-528-7571 217-528-9364	1,400	Carl Bimm, President	19	1887
4	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local No. 193	3150 Wide Track Drive Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-3479 217-544-0193 ibew193.com ibew193@comcast.net	940	Glenn Baugh, Business Manager	9	1901
5	Plumbers & Steamfitters, Local 137	2880 E. Cook St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-2724 217-744-6855 ualocal137.org	892	John Haines, Business Manager	18	1895
6	Plasterers and Cement Masons, Local 18	40 Adloff Lane, Suite 6A Springfield, IL 62703	217-585-4221 217-585-4222 lpcmia18.org localunion18@att.net	750	Steve Clement, Business Manager; Mark Winkler, Business Agent and Pres. of Central IL Building and Construction Trades Council	32	1864
7	Sheet Metal Workers, Local 218	2855 Via Verde Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-0161 217-529-6005	700	Ed Robison, Business Manager	21	1969
8	Iron Workers, Local 46	2888 E. Cook St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-4041 217-528-9046 ironworkers46.org iwaustin@sbcglobal.net	315	Shane Austin, Business Manager	20	1908
9	Millwrights, Local 1051	602 Keokuk St. Lincoln, IL 62656	217-735-1051 217-732-1051 millwrightlocal1051.com local1051@carpentersunion.org	296	Jeff Bort, Business Representative; Nate Hodgson, Business Representative	41	1987
10	International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 58, Local 90	3223 Lake Plaza Dr. Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-6976 217-529-6658 dc58iupat.org mbristow@dc58.org	273	Nicholas Mettlemeyer, Business Representative	9	1899



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Springfield attorney to vice-chair Supreme Court committee

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Springfield attorney Raylene M. DeWitte Grischow knows that not everyone likes lawyers. She's looking to change that in her new role as vice-chair of the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Professional Responsibility.

DeWitte Grischow, who practices at the Springfield branch of law firm Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, was appointed to the role on Jan. 1 by Illinois Supreme Court Justice Rita Garman. The appointment puts her on track to become chair of the committee in 2018.

As past president of the Central Illinois Women's Bar Association and past president of the Sangamon County Bar Association, DeWitte Grischow formed a relationship with Garman and was appointed as a member of the Committee on Professional Responsibility in 2012.

The committee studies issues of legal ethics and professional responsibility, making recommendations to the Illinois Supreme Court on how to handle such

matters. DeWitte Grischow says that means ensuring integrity, civility, equality and the elimination of bias in the legal profession. Among the issues she expects to address in the coming year are harassment and discrimination. The committee has also examined topics like ghost writing, in which an attorney may help someone draft a legal document without actually representing them or putting their name on the document.

"Being professional and ethical is very important," she said. "It goes to the core of an attorney's responsibilities."

DeWitte Grischow says her niece once asked why she has to study the U.S. Constitution in school. DeWitte Grischow admitted that studying in a classroom may be boring, but the practical applications are endless.

"I use it every day in my practice," she said. "Seeing how it applies in real life situations is amazing. It's amazing how the law has an impact on people's lives." ♦



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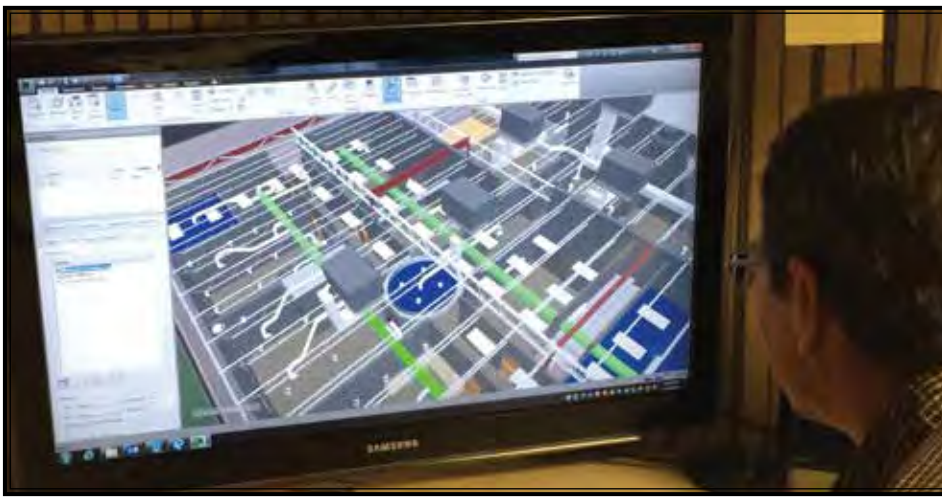
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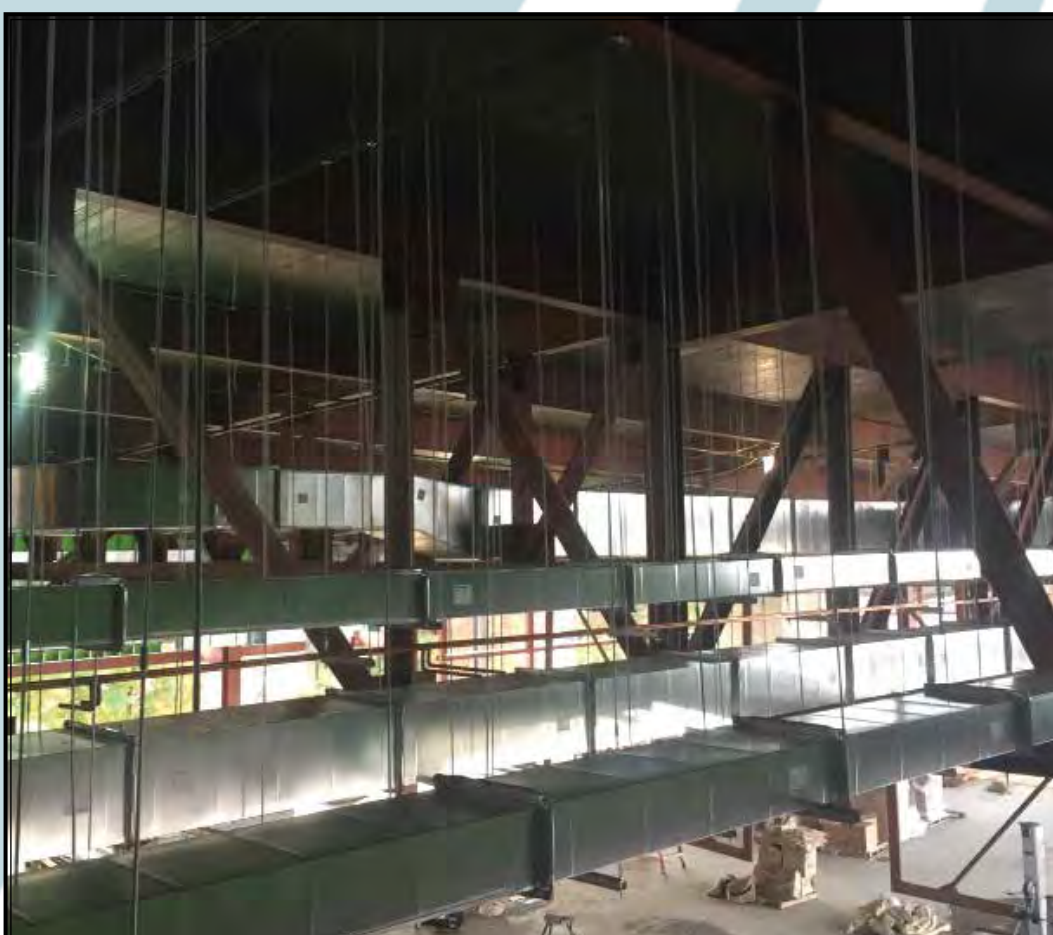


SIU Center of Family Medicine



St. John's Hospital

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Sources: Mechanical Contractors Association of Central Illinois, the contractors.
Listed by total number of employees – peak season.

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1	E. L. Pruitt 3090 Colt Road Springfield, IL 62707	217-789-0966 217-789=2694 elpruitt.com	262	John Pruitt	HVAC, Plumbing, Fire Protection, Architectural Sheet Metal	Springfield, Il: Memorial Medical Center, St. John's Hospital, Springfield Clinic, Concordia Village, Heritage Manor, Villas of Sherman, Southside Christian Church, Christ the King, Calvary Temple, Lincoln Land Community college, University of Illinois at Springfield, Iles Park Place, Lincoln Library, Prairie Capital Convention Center, Bunn Gourmet, Bunnomatic, Dominos, Harris Building, Security Bank, Booth Building, Skyzone Trampoline Park, Soloman Color Plant, Prairie Eye, WICS, Party City, Jubilee Farms, Carmax, District 186 Decatur: Millikin University, Acorn, ADM, Decatur Memorial Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, Decatur Park District, Crown Cork & Seal, Mueller Company, Bridgestone, Firestone, Fuyao USA Glass; Surrounding Areas: Passavant Area Hospital, Jacksonville Water Treatment Plant, Lincoln Central Elementary School, Taylorville Memorial Hospital, Illini Hospital, St. Francis Hospital, Taylorville Senior Village, USDA	1971
2	Henson Robinson Company / Petersburg Plumbing and Excavating 3550 Great Northern Ave. Springfield, IL 62711	217-544-8451 217-544=0829 henson-robinson.com hrc@henson-robinson.com	231	Dan Hoselton	Commercial HVAC, Roofing, Plumbing, Piping, Refrigeration, Architectural Sheet Metal, HVAC/Plumbing Service, Sewer and Water Mains, Excavation, Residential Heating and Cooling Installation and Service	Education: U of I Champaign, UIS, Blackburn College, Lincoln College, St. John's College of Nursing, Springfield College, Springfield Public Schools, Ball/Chatham, Rochester, Decatur Public Schools, Sacred Heart-Griffin, Carlinville, Morrisonville, Athens/Cantrall, Murrayville, Ill. School for the Deaf; Medical: Memorial Medical Center, St. John's Hospital, Springfield Clinic, St. Francis Hospital, Bloomington Orthopedic, Hospital Sisters; Government: Capitol Complex, CWLP, IDoT, Ill. State Fairgrounds, Ill. Air Guard, Ill. Supreme Court, various Prison Facilities; Private Business: Hy-Vee, LA Fitness, Dick Van Dyke, Illinois Plumbing, Caterpillar, Carlisle, Brandt Consolidated, Ergadoo, White Oaks Plaza, 5 Guys, Heritage Manor, Marine Bank, State Bank of Lincoln, INB, Simon Properties, ADM.	1861
3	F. J. Murphy & Son, Inc. 1800 Factory Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-528-4081 217-528=4147 fjmurphy.com cfricke@fjmurphy.com	75	Chad Fricke	Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, Fire Sprinklers, Refrigeration, Restaurant Equipment, Ice Machines, residential, commercial, institutional, installation and repair	Illinois Supreme Court, Illinois School for the Deaf, Jacksonville Development Center, Regency Nursing Home, Dept. of Agriculture, SEIU Offices, White House/Black Market, H.H. Gregg, White Oaks Mall, The Icing, Hot Topic, U of I Champaign, UIS, Western IL University, Eastern IL University, IL State University, Memorial Hospital, SIU Edwardsville, SIU Carbondale, Caterpillar Peoria, Preckwinkle Home upgrade, hundreds of small repair and remodel projects - residential and commercial.	1947
4	Prairie State Plumbing & Heating 3900 Peoria Road Springfield, IL 62702	217-636-9000 217-636-8927	55	Jerry Judd	Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, Electical, Mechanical, Sitework, Ventilation	Rochester Intermediate School, Rochester Atheltic Complex,Mason District Hospital, Blessed Sacrament School, AT&T, Christian Homes, Springfield Metro Sanitary District, Palmyra Northwestern School, Springfield Pepsi, Brandt Consolidated, Prairie Capital Convention Center remodel.	2005
5	Mike Williams Plumbing and Heating 3225 E. Clearlake Springfield, IL 62712	217-753-4545 217-753=4548 mikewilliams.net csr1@mikewilliams.net	40	Lewis Williams	HVAC, Heating, Air Conditioning and Plumbing	Residential Service & Repair & Pre-Season Maintenance Tune-up.	1976
6	Airmasters - Commercial Mechanical Contractor 1330 North Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-9793 217-522=7293 theairmasters.com rmathews@theairmasters.com	26	Robert Mathews	Commercial Mechanical Contractor, HVAC/R, Sheet Metal	St. Johns Hospital - Life Safety Upgrades; St. Mary's Hospital - IT Upgrades; White Oaks Mall - Auntie Anne's; White Oaks Mall - Kay Jeweler Remodel; Fiducial - Remodel Laurel United Methodist - Chiller Park Place - Boiler; First Congregational Church - VRV; System Prairie Power - IT Upgrades; Christian Village - Replacements; Casey's General Stores - Service, Replacements and New Construction	1993
6	Allied Plumbing & Heating, Inc. 1315 Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-5500 217-698=5505 alliedpnh.com mark@alliedpnh.com	26	Mark Miller	Residential and Light Commercial Service, Replacement and Construction, Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, Ventilation, Sewer and Drain	HVAC and Plumbing in both Residential New Construction, Replacement, Service and Light Commercial New Construction, Replacement and Service.	1977
7	Johnson Controls, Inc. 4231 Westgate Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-793-8858 217-793=8759 johnsoncontrols.com	25	Corporate Owned	Commercial HVAC, Fire Security, Light Residential	University of Illinois - Champaign Post Genomic Institute, SIU School of Medicine Labs.	1885
8	Aire Serv / HRI Plumbing 560 North St. Springfield, IL 62704	217-523-8594 217-243=7002 aireserv.com/cil aireserv@as-hri.com	20	Chris Williams, Jennifer Williams	Residential, commercial, and industrial service for HVAC equipment and ductwork. Indoor Air Quality, including duct cleaning. Commercial kitchen and refrigeration, including ice machines, coolers, and freezers. Chillers, boilers, and Geothermal. Plumbing for residential and light commercial.	Cargill, Jacksonville High School - Building automation, IL Coalition Against Domestic Violence - rooftop units, IL Dept. of Human Services, Casey's General Stores, Multiple local banks and restaurants. Multiple residential projects.	1985
9	Tom's Heating, Air Conditioning & Plumbing, Inc. 2809 N. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62702	217-525-8667 217-525=5926 tomsheatingandair.com tomshtg@sbcglobal.net	13	Tom Garmers	Plumbing & HVAC repairs and service and retail sales. Light commercial and residential.	Habitat for Humanity homes, Cameron Smith & Assoc., various new home construction, plumbing remodels, infloor heating systems, geothermal, boilers, HVAC replacements.	1982
10	Central Illinois York, Inc. 1210 E. Laurel Springfield, IL 62703	217-522-3371 217-522=1341 york321@aol.com	6	Bruce Ruyle	Commercial, Industrial, Residential, Heating, AC, Ventilation, Sheet Metal	Midwest Technical Institute, Andrews Engineering, Kerasotes Theaters - Parkway Pointe; Midwest Technical Institute Peoria; Eagles Club, Riverton; Holiday Inn, Baton Rouge, Maryville Manor; City of Salem, Ill.; Staab Funeral Home.	1940
11	Eades Heating & Air Conditioning Inc. 525 Fraase Road New Berlin, IL 62670	217-529-5767 217-725=5391 eadesheatingandair@gmail.com	5	Ron & Melanie Eades	Commercial and residential service and repair, residential Installation for all heating and air conditioning systems, water heater repair and replacement	Service all of Springfield and surrounding area for over 33 years, service and replace units for multiple AT&T locations all over Illinois, specialize in servicing property management rental properties	1983

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The many trials of Rick Lawrence

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Rick Lawrence jokes that he must have been “a foolish old man” to take on a building rehabilitation project like the one he’s currently doing downtown.

Although Lawrence’s characteristic self-effacing humor belies the fact that he has done numerous projects in the construction industry over 40 years, his current project has indeed presented a plethora of problems. Still, he’s methodically working through them with a goal in mind: rehab three underutilized buildings to help in the rebirth of Springfield’s downtown.

“I saw challenge,” he said, explaining why he decided to do the project at all. “I saw old buildings in disrepair and neglect for 10 or 15 years that, in their day, were some of the more prominent buildings in downtown Springfield. I still feel that I can restore them back to their original grandeur. It’s just trying to convince other people.”

Lawrence is president at Siciliano Inc., one of Springfield’s largest commercial construction firms. In recent years, Siciliano has tackled high-profile projects like the Dana-Thomas House, the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and Lincoln’s New Salem visitor center.

“I’ve been involved in lots of renovation projects, but this is the first one I’m doing myself, for me,” Lawrence said.

His current project is rehabilitating the three buildings located in the 500 block of East Monroe

Street. He bought the buildings in 2014 and plans to fill them with a mix of office space and apartments. The eight-story Ferguson Building on the southwest corner of Monroe and Sixth streets previously held the now-closed Café Brio, which Lawrence hopes to replace with a new commercial tenant. Across a narrow alley to the west of the Ferguson Building sits the smaller three-story Bateman-Kennedy Building and the eight-story Booth Building.

In addition to his own financing, Lawrence received \$1.9 million in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funding for the project. He says that without TIF funds, many projects like this simply wouldn’t be economically viable.

“If there wasn’t a TIF, we wouldn’t be doing this,” he said. “It’s huge. It’s a very vital part of the process that helps developers and building owners realize the potential of their property so it will generate taxes.

“A historic tax credit will also help make the project viable, but getting the credit was one of Lawrence’s first headaches. That’s because the Ferguson Building was inside the Central Springfield Historic District, but the Booth Building, less than 50 feet away was not. To receive the tax credit for his work on the Booth Building, Lawrence and the City of Springfield’s Office of Planning and Economic Development convinced the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to expand the historic district.

At present, Lawrence and his team are building apartments inside the Booth Building,

following a makeover of the façade. Lawrence hopes to tie the Booth and Ferguson buildings together with a brick structure holding an elevator and stairs. However, earthquake building codes prohibit the buildings from being structurally linked, meaning Lawrence’s team had to devise a way to connect the buildings without making them touch.

“It added a lot of expense to the project we hadn’t anticipated,” he said.

Along the way, Lawrence also had to convince the city to obtain an easement for the city-owned alley between the buildings so that his link between them would fit.

Another hurdle with the buildings is that their combined footprint is quite small, Lawrence says.

“You’re very limited in what you can do with them,” he said, “Even if you took the buildings away, the empty piece of ground wouldn’t be big enough to do anything with. You couldn’t even make a parking lot out of it. So, you’ve got to be imaginative and resourceful to figure out uses that can generate an income to support the debt for it.”

While there is much talk of attracting more people to live downtown, having the buildings rezoned for residential use presented a problem because there isn’t enough parking available to meet building code requirements. The city zoning board eventually granted Lawrence a variance from the parking requirements, and although the delay annoyed him, he doesn’t fault the city.

“The city’s been helpful,” he said. “They’ve

been very helpful, but it’s just been one problem after another.”

Years of neglect and bird droppings have required extensive work inside and out. Aluminum grates that once covered the Ferguson building – no doubt giving it a modern appearance at some point in the past – provided a popular roost for birds whose droppings etched the stone and glass on the façade. Lawrence removed the grates, but fixing the façade will take more work.

The façades themselves have presented another problem. Lawrence says he wanted to restore the buildings to how they appeared when they were built in the early 1900s, but the National Park Service insisted on the buildings being restored to their 1950s appearance because the current facades are more appropriate for that era.

“We spent months kaputzing with them,” he said. “I ended up saying ‘uncle.’ ”

The timeline for the project is uncertain, Lawrence says, but his team is making progress on the apartments in the Booth Building. Lawrence says keeping his patience despite the project’s many roadblocks has been a matter of staying focused on the finish line.

“I get excited about what it will look like when it’s done,” her said. “I think I can hold up long enough to get it done, it’s going to go a long way to complement the other nice buildings. If I can get it done, it’s going to take threee buidlings that were sitting vacant and deteriorating and make them a viable contributor to the downtown. ♦

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The Ferguson Building on 6th Street

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



Rick Lawrence

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



Architectual rendering by Steckel-Parker Architects

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The new Bunn headquarters

PHOTO / PATRICK RUSSEL

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Everyone at Bunn-O-Matic Corporation seems genuinely glad to be there – and not just because of the free coffee. Bunn is arguably one of Springfield's oldest and largest companies, but there is a vibrant, inviting atmosphere at Bunn's gleaming new corporate headquarters on the western edge of Springfield, where visitors are greeted by smiling receptionists and a bevy of free drink options from the company's extensive lineup of beverage equipment.

Bunn's commitment to the development and well-being of its employees is clear, making it easy to see why the company is one of Springfield's best places to work.

Bunn-O-Matic Corporation traces its lineage

back to the 1840s, when Jacob Bunn Sr. opened a grocery store in Springfield and started a fascinating family legacy that involves several other enterprises which shaped Springfield's history. However, Bunn-O-Matic really grew out of George R. Bunn's frustration with bad coffee in the 1950s. At the time, Bunn ran Bunn Capitol Food Distributors, the grocery empire that his ancestors had started. His experiments seeking a better way of making coffee led to his invention of the fluted, flat-bottom coffee filter. He built a coffee machine to use his invention and successfully sold it door-to-door, eventually starting a new company separate from the grocery business in 1963.

Today, Bunn has offices around the U.S., as well as in Canada, the United Kingdom, Brazil,

Mexico, China and the United Arab Emirates. Bunn's products are sold in 83 countries around the globe, yet it is still family owned, with its global headquarters in Springfield.

Arthur "Hy" Bunn, president and CEO of Bunn-O-Matic, is quick credit his employees for the company's success. "It's the people here who make it a great place to work," he said. "Our job as managers is to basically support that and stay out of the way so that people feel enabled to attract others like them, who share the same values."

Josh Bell, global sales project manager at Bunn, started his career there as a welder in 1998. With an enthusiastic smile, Bell describes how Bunn supported his desire to learn and grow from a young age by providing training

and several new opportunities. His job is never boring, he says, but what keeps him excited about coming to work is the family culture at Bunn – one built on strong relationships and cooperation. "Most people, once they get here, they stay here," he said. "I'm still pretty new, compared to some of the people who have been here 30 or 40 years. It's very much a family; you work with people so long that you become family with them."

For Desiree Logsdon, senior vice president for corporate citizenship at Bunn, it was the Bunn family's positive reputation in Springfield that first led her to work for Bunn Capitol Company, the separate food service business where Logsdon was director of the company's test kitchen.



Josh Bell

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



Bunn's new logo

PHOTO / COURTESY OF BUNN



Bunn carafes turned into decorative accents at the company

PHOTO / PATRICK RUSSEL

After Bunn Capitol was sold in 2006, Logsdon moved over to Bunn-O-Matic, where she now coordinates Bunn's efforts at corporate citizenship –things like sustainability and volunteerism. Logsdon also served for the past two years as the head of Pease's at Bunn Gourmet, the popular eatery at The Gables started in 2014 as a partnership between Bunn-O-Matic and Pease's Candy.

Logsdon says the test kitchen where she started her career at Bunn Capitol is now used to pop the popcorn sold at Bunn Gourmet. She jokingly refers to it as "the Popcorn Palace." "It's kind of full circle for me," she said. Logsdon says Bunn allows employees paid time off for volunteering, with no cap on hours. She says Bunn employees have volunteered for everything

from charity golf events to overseas mission trips. Over the past 10 years, Bunn employees have logged 89,000 volunteer hours. "When you do good work for other people in the community," she said, "you just feel good about yourself."

Bunn also has a learning program called the Development Guild, in which employees meet weekly to learn about topics ranging from homelessness and domestic violence to coffee production in other countries. "It's kind of a program for the people, by the people," Logsdon said. "They design it. They decide what to learn about, and then they pick projects. Along the way, they not only become better people; they become better leaders."

Recent projects have included remodeling

the Family Service Center in Springfield and partnering with 450 youth volunteers to do 80 home projects for senior citizens and people with disabilities. Logsdon says what she loves about Bunn is that the company and its employees "live and breathe the mission every day" – a mission to make a positive difference. "It's not just lip service," she said. "It's all about the people. That's what really makes a difference. Our people are really willing to do whatever it takes to create a good workplace and a good community." Logsdon says there is a culture of mutual respect at Bunn. "That makes it easy to come to work each day," she said, "when you like the people you work with."

Scott Lee, senior vice president of human resources, has worked at Bunn for 23 years,

starting out as a safety manager at Bunn's manufacturing plants. Lee says Bunn offers advancement opportunities in all of its departments, which leads to the high employee retention rate compared with the national average for similar-sized companies. He also notes that working at Bunn includes several other unique benefits, like a free coffee machine after 30 days of employment and a wellness program which encourages employee health and happiness.

"We're able to do some really neat things as an organization," he said, "but it's really driven by the people and how they feel about the company – their work ethic, their ideas, and their generosity." ♦



Robert "Bobby" Fritz

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Jay Bates jokes that he's been drinking Coors Light since the day it was invented. Naturally, selling it is a dream come true.

"I love the job," said Bates, who works at Robert "Chick" Fritz Inc. beer distributors in Springfield. "I love what I sell, I love what I do, and I love the Fritz family."

Bates and his coworkers describe their branch of the nearly 70-year-old company as a fun place to work with their favorite product, for a family which treats them well.

Robert "Chick" Fritz started his company in southern Illinois in 1947, eventually setting up headquarters in Belleville. His son, Robert L. "Chick" Fritz, took on the company in the 1970s and led it through a period of expansion – both in products and territory. Robert L. Fritz is still involved today as principal and chairman of the board. His daughter and son, Ann Fritz and Robert "Bobby" G. Fritz, run the company's day-to-day operations.

Bobby Fritz, who serves as president,

started his career at the company as a kid, helping out around the warehouse and getting a commercial driver's license to run deliveries at the age of 16. He says his grandfather's ideals of friendliness and a focus on doing one thing well still guide the company.

"We've stuck to those models all the way, and it's brought us to where we are today," he said.

Jay Bates, who serves as on-premises account sales manager and special event manager, says he was the first person hired at the Springfield warehouse when the company first expanded here. He says what he likes most about working at Chick Fritz is the Fritz family itself.

"It's a tight-knit family business," he said. "They're very loyal to their customers and strive for good customer service and relations."

Bates says the Fritz family stands behind its employees.

"They give you the tools to do your job," he said. "Working in sales is a tough business

no matter what you're selling, but they load you up with the tools to succeed. It's not like they just throw you to the wolves."

He especially values the flexibility he's afforded in his job. "If you have some hurdles in your life, they're not going to turn their back on you," Bates said. "They stand along with you and everything that goes with that."

Bobby Fritz says it's important to the company that employees be content and cared for.

"We've always tried to treat everybody like we want to be treated," he said. "You've got to have good people to go forward. And also, they wear your uniform and your name, so you want them to represent you in the best way possible – in their words and their actions. You want them to have a good attitude, because if they don't, it reflects on who you are."

Ron Adams, a salesman at the Springfield warehouse, says he has been selling beer since 1980. He started at Chick Fritz about six years ago when the company acquired another distributor for which Adams was working at

the time.

"Working for a family distributorship is a wonderful thing," he said. "They go through the same thing we do. It's just a great family to work for."

He jokes that he went into the beer business because he didn't want to work on the weekends. "It's just a fun job," Adams said.

"It's a lot of work, but there are also a lot of good people. And everybody likes the beer man, so that doesn't hurt."

Adams praises the Fritz family for their generosity, including cases of free beer for holidays and a Christmas ham each year. "That's lovely," he said. "You can't beat that." Adams also likes the friendly atmosphere of the Springfield warehouse, adding that there's very little turnover among the staff.

"There's a good bunch of people here," he said. "Most of the people who are in this business have been in it for a long time. It's just one of those jobs you never want to quit." ♦



Ron Adams

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



Jay Bates

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



(L-R) Nicole Gibbons, Brent Davis and Bree Heineman

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Katie Van Dyke was having a bad day. She was stressed out because of a job change one day in 2012 when she went for a routine meeting with her financial advisor at Edward Jones Investments. “I thought it was going to be just ‘sign here,’” she said. “I don’t even know if I looked him in the eye when I came in, and he took my papers and set them to the side. He said, ‘I want to know how you’re doing.’ It brought a tear to my eye because I felt a connection; this person really cares about me.” Van Dyke was so moved by the experience that she now works as a senior branch office administrator at Edward Jones in downtown Springfield. Her experience is one of many

similar stories shared by Edward Jones employees in Springfield and Jacksonville. Although each office has only one financial advisor, employees say they don’t feel like they’re competing; in fact, they feel like part of a team.

Edward D. Jones Sr. started Edward Jones Investments in St. Louis in 1922. It has since grown to nearly 15,000 financial advisors across the U.S. and Canada. The company is divided into regions, with Springfield belonging to a region that covers 13 counties.

DuWayne Reichart, the regional leader for Springfield, started with Edward Jones in 1998. He says what attracted him to the company was the ability to set his own hours, the autonomy to run his office and the

fact that no upfront investment is required. What has kept Reichart there has been the company’s positive atmosphere and good reputation. “I like working for a great company that has consistently been in the top rankings,” he said. “Recognition helps draw good people.”

Edward Jones has been active in Central Illinois since 1975, Reichart says, noting that an advisor based in Lincoln recently retired after 40 years of service. He says Edward Jones tends to attract people who are self-starters, but only about eight percent of applicants make it through the four-to-six-week screening process. “We want to make sure they’re a good fit,” he said. “You need to have a positive attitude, and we end up with a lot of personalities that are very

similar.”

Kevin Frontone is the financial advisor at the downtown Edward Jones office. He says he joined the company 12 years ago in part because of its partnership structure, in which employees are also part owners and receive a share of the profits. “Everyone works together instead of against each other,” he said. “We pull for each other and work for each others’ success. That changes the whole dynamic of the company.”

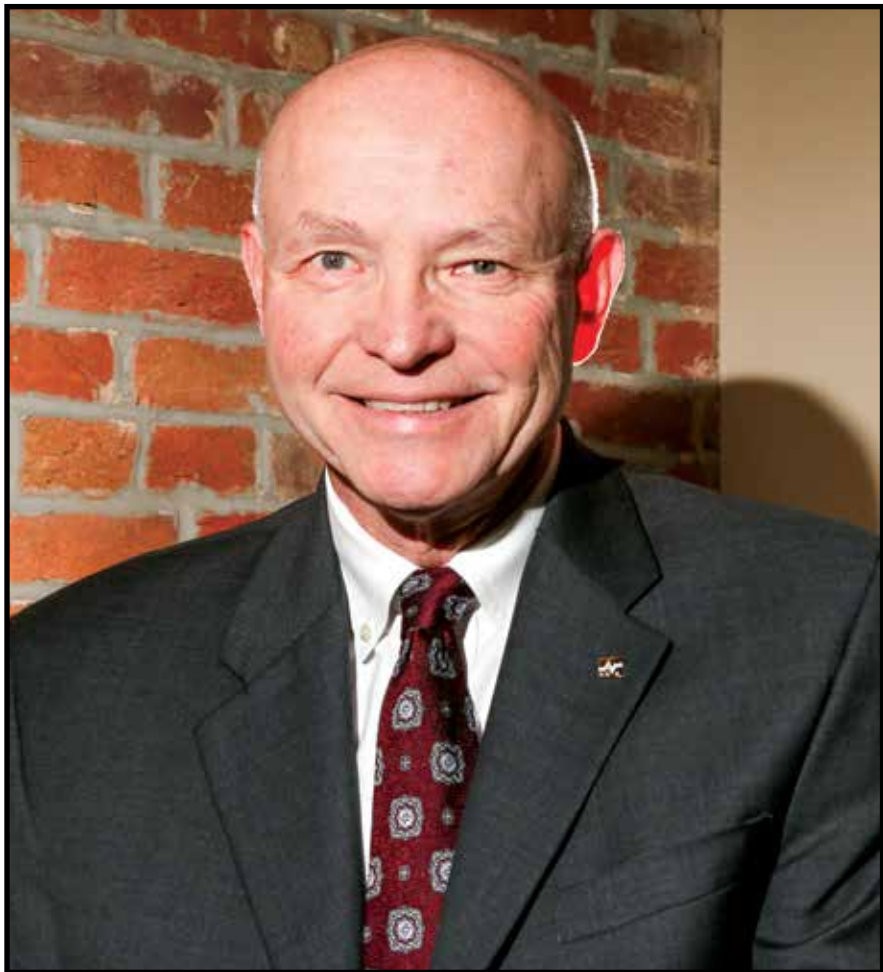
Frontone says he is motivated by the opportunity to help people.

“I love that when I wake up in the morning, I know I get to make a difference for people,” he said. VanDyke, the senior branch office administrator at the downtown



Katie Van Dyke

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



DuWayne Reichart

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE
Kevin Frontone



Brent Bordenkircher

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

office, has a similar motivation. “We have the privilege not only to oversee their financial household, but really to take it a step further with that personal touch,” she said. “We dive deep to know them at a personal level – to know what’s important to them, to know their hopes and dreams.”

Van Dyke says clients will often share good news like the birth of a grandchild or an upcoming retirement. “It’s rewarding because they’ll call and include us in these milestones,” she said. VanDyke also serves as regional event coordinator and has

served as a client solutions advocate, which involves training others within the company on new programs and tools. It’s all part of Edward Jones’ investment in its employees. “They really encourage their employees to do well and stay a long time,” she said.

Brent Bordenkircher is a second-generation Edward Jones financial advisor, following in his father’s footsteps. Bordenkircher, who runs the office in downtown Jacksonville, says he got to see firsthand as a child how Edward Jones takes care of its employees. “What I didn’t really

see until I started here is how client-focused we are,” he said. “Everything centers around doing what’s right for the client. I was lucky enough to have my dad as a mentor, and he sat me down one day and said, ‘Brent, if you always do what’s best for the client, this business is going to take care of itself.’ And it really has.”

Bree Heineman is senior branch office administrator for financial advisor Brent Davis in Springfield. Heineman says she was drawn to the job 15 years ago because of the small office environment and the ability

to work directly with clients.

“I just enjoy working with people, helping them work toward and reach their goals,” she said. “It’s not just about the numbers here. It’s about relationships.” ♦



Dr. Jerry Kruse

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

SIU Medicine in Springfield has accomplished something no other institution has ever done in the history of American medicine. In 2015, the school received an eight-year accreditation with no citations and three commendations – an unprecedented feat. It was also the first to receive three awards from the Association for Medical Education in Europe, a worldwide organization. Those are just some of the prestigious honors earned by SIU Medicine – thanks in large part to the school’s employees and a collective commitment to their mission.

SIU Medicine was founded in Springfield in 1970 as Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, with a mission of meeting healthcare needs through education, patient care, research and service to the community. The organization, which is composed of

the School of Medicine and SIU Healthcare, serves 66 counties in central and southern Illinois.

Dr. Jerry Kruse, dean of the School of Medicine and CEO of SIU Medicine, leads the organization with a humility and dedication that seem contagious. He still saw patients himself until just a few years ago, saying it was “a sad day” when he had to give it up to focus on his leadership duties. However, Kruse is glad for the opportunity to help set the school’s strategic direction, and he says he couldn’t do it without the school’s employees.

“Moving toward that is really the thing that’s gratifying to me,” he said. “Working with thousands of great people is the thing that keeps the engine going.”

Dr. Don Caspary has worked at SIU almost from the very start. He drove to Springfield from his home state of New York in the freezing rain in 1973 to help establish the school’s research arm. His laboratory is a

hotbed of cutting-edge research on hearing loss, and he even helped install much of the original lab wiring himself.

“The first few years were fascinating, to watch an institution get off the ground,” he said.

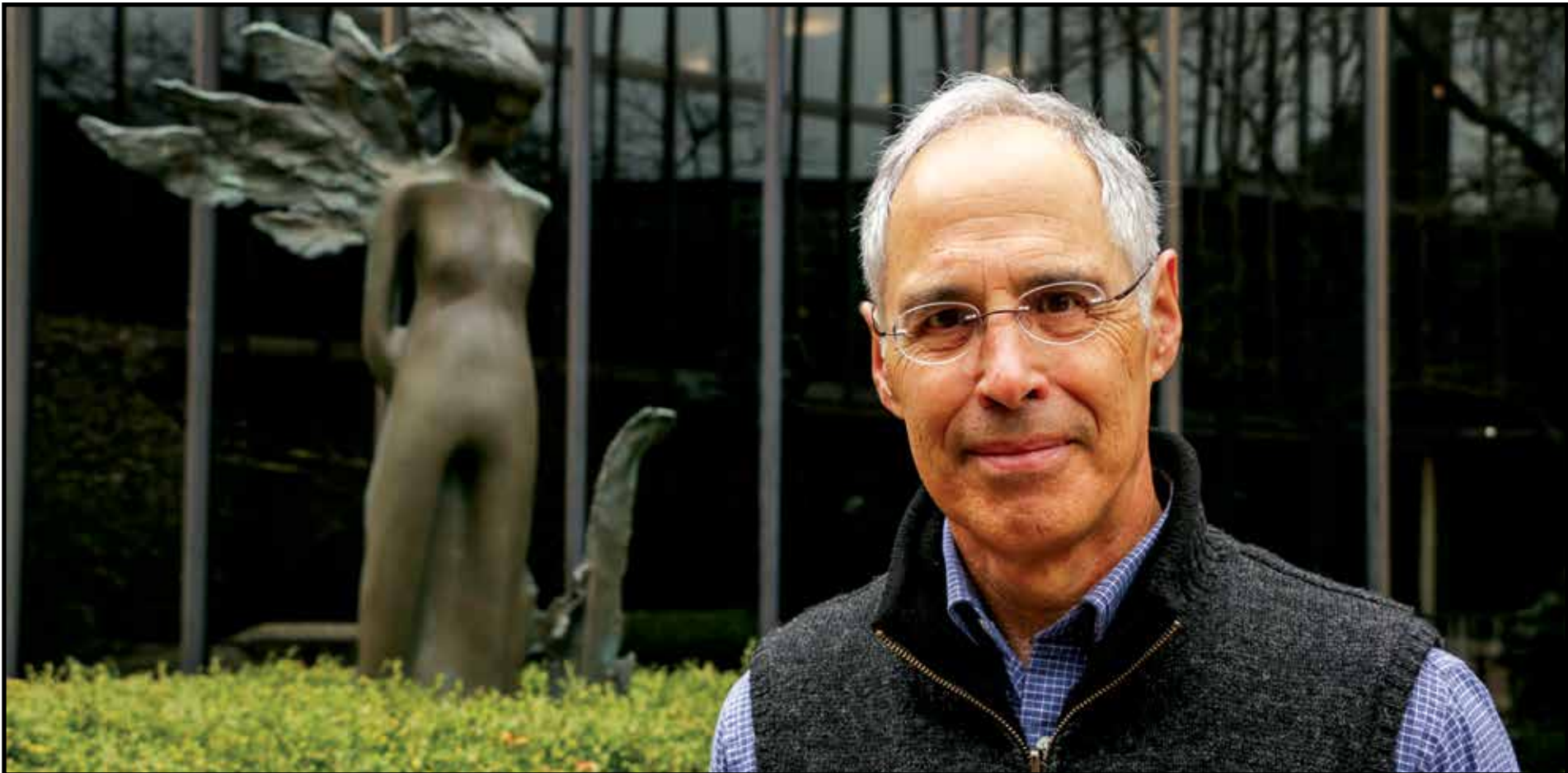
Caspary says part of what has kept him at SIU over the years has been the school’s commitment to quality research.

“I’ve got great people to work with, and it’s been exciting,” he said.

Carolyn Holmes is a board-certified registered nurse who works as a curriculum development specialist at SIU. Part of her job is working with medical students one-on-one to prepare them for the medical profession. Holmes says the school is moving toward a “coaching model” that goes beyond mere head knowledge to produce well-rounded professionals.

“In that respect, you’re not just looking at grades and clinical performance,” she said. “You’re really exploring the individual as a person and what barriers might exist and get in the way of them achieving their goals. In that process, I’m able to uncover the different dimensions of this person and make them understand that they bring all of this to the table when they’re examining patients and when they’re interacting with patients. They’re able to then move that forward to the community.”

Dr. Sameer Vohra graduated from SIU with his medical degree and a law degree in 2007. He now serves as executive director of the school’s Office of Population Science and Policy, as well as an assistant professor of pediatrics and medical humanities. Vohra says 80 percent of a person’s health is determined by factors outside the realm of direct medical care – things like behavior, socio-economic environment



Dr. Don Caspary

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



Jo Turley

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

Carolyn Holmes



and even physical environment. The fact that Vohra’s office even exists – one of very few like it nationwide – is a testament to SIU’s commitment to its mission.

“We felt if we really cared about the health as a medical school, that we needed to approach this 80 percent,” he said, “and work with our communities – especially the Springfield community – to find ways to improve people’s health outside the healthcare setting.”

That intentional effort to go beyond the merely mandatory touches every aspect of SIU’s existence, from its consistent volunteerism efforts to its approach to staffing.

Jo Turley started her career at SIU Healthcare as a receptionist. Turley is now SIU Healthcare medical staff coordinator, a role in which she oversees several functions like maintaining hospital privileges for

doctors. Turley says SIU has invested in the support structure needed to keep the organization running smoothly. Even though her team isn’t seeing patients or conducting research, she says her department is still an integral part of SIU’s efforts.

“We feel like we do have a role in the mission, and our work does affect the mission,” she said.

Just as Kruse credits his employees with the success of SIU, Turley credits Kruse with giving the organization a fresh vision and vitality.

“With Dr. Kruse maintaining that dual role, it has sort of meshed the mission of the two organizations and created an environment that’s full of excitement and possibilities,” Turley said. “There is such a team effort here. It’s a great place to work, a fun place to work. I feel like everybody here is committed to doing the best job they can.” ♦



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



2010 Brandt Consolidated

The Brandt culture supports real people core values and rewards forward thinking in an environment that feels more like an extended family than a corporation. Brandt is committed to promoting communication, self expression, and encouraging employees to reach their fullest potential.

2010 Lincoln Land Community College

Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) considers its employees as its greatest asset. LLCC offers a tuition reimbursement program that extends to immediate family and a unique "sick bank" for employees requiring additional time off. While LLCC offers competitive employee benefits, staff members feel most rewarded by the educational opportunities provided for students.



2010 Orthopedic Center of Illinois

OCI is dedicated to making all employees feel like part of the family by fostering a team based work environment in a state of the art facility. They offer flexible scheduling and employee recognition programs. OCI strives to offer employees a rewarding place to work by allowing them opportunities to give back to the community through many charitable organizations.

2011 BJ Salons Inc.

At BJ Salons, they feel education is the secret to their success. Owners, John and Gail Lorenzini, make company paid education and training a top priority to ensure all employees stay current in the latest trends and techniques. BJ Salon is also dedicated to helping their employees achieve a work-life balance by offering flexible work arrangements.



2011 M.J. Kellner Foodservice

Bill and Julie Kellner, owners of M.J. Kellner Foodservice, embrace the philosophy of treating employees like family. They make sure that every decision is made with the big picture in mind so that employees are looked after while keeping the business strong. The company recognizes and rewards employees by acknowledging birthdays, holding holiday parties and monthly company luncheons.

2011 Springfield Clinic

Springfield Clinic is in the business of caring for people, patients and employees alike. Their Commitment to Quality (CTQ) encourages employees to go above and beyond to enhance the patient experience. Springfield Clinic places a high priority on employee recognition. Employees are recognized with monthly "Employee Excellence Awards" and an "Employee of the Year Award".



2012 Express Employment Professionals

Express Employment Professionals values community involvement by establishing a philanthropic committee which designates funds to a variety of causes through the corporate giving program. This enables employees to help communities, organizations and individuals succeed on both an international and local level.

2012 & 2013 St. John's Hospital

St. John's Hospital believes that the power of people makes the difference in patient care. They strive to create a warm, family-oriented work atmosphere in order to provide the best possible care for patients. St. John's Hospital also provides the staff with the latest tools to deliver excellent care in professional and nurturing work environment.



2012 Systemax Corporation

Systemax prides itself on its reputation for quality, dependability, and knowledgeable service. The staff is encouraged to work with management daily to create a better customer experience. Systemax promotes a professional and fun work environment to encourage employee commitment to excellent customer service one solution at a time.

2013 Kerber, Eck & Braechel LLP

Kerber, Eck & Braeckel operates under 21 partners and principal owners and includes more than 130 professionals. Although KEB focuses primarily on public accounting and management consultant services, it offers a wide range of other products to its clients including, but not limited to, information technology, retirement planning and even investment planning services.



2013 Sacred Heart-Griffin

Sacred Heart-Griffin's inception came from the merger of Sacred Heart Academy and Griffin High in 1988. In that time, much has changed. The school has expanded with classroom additions, facility renovation and even a new multipurpose athletics stadium. But the core principle, the marrying of academic pursuit with a literal religious adherence, remains the same.

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St. John's Hospital believes that the power of people makes the difference in patient care. They strive to create a warm, family-oriented work atmosphere in order to provide the best possible care for patients. St. John's Hospital also provides the staff with the latest tools to deliver excellent care in professional and nurturing work environment.



2014 Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc.

Levi, Ray & Shoup (LRS) cares deeply for the community, but also for its employees. They donate to a different charity each week and regularly give employees appreciation gifts. LRS has a full, on-site gym for its employees and their families to use that is accessible 24 hours a day and even cater parties for employees to spend time together outside of the workplace.

2014 Prairie Eye Center

At Prairie Eye Center employees are given time off to donate eye services to charity and to assist low-income patients at SIU School of Medicine. They are also encouraged to support each other through hardships and celebrate with each other in times of prosperity. They offer their staff a multitude of benefits to make Prairie Eye Center a unique and fulfilling work experience.



2014 The Real Estate Group

The brokers at The Real Estate Group take the complicated task of purchasing a home and make it easy for the home buyer. They also donate time and resources to the community, volunteering with Springfield Sharefest to help local schools in need. The Group offers its employees flexible hours, a mentoring program, and a fun, light-hearted environment.

2015 County Market

The key to Niemann Foods success is its associate owners. Everyone is family, and this tone is set by Rich Niemann, Sr., company chairman. Niemann Foods, parent company to County Market, is a third-generation, independently operated, family-owned business. The company formally became an ESOP company 17 or 18 years ago, which Niemann said is the best thing they ever did.



2015 Green Family Stores

Green Family Stores believes in giving back to the community. The company started the Green Family Charitable Foundation and every month writes checks to local not-for-profit organizations. Among the organizations they support are: The Matthew Project, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, Sparc, Boys and Girls Club, St. John's Hospital and youth football.

2015 Springfield Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company

A fourth-generation, family-owned business, Springfield Pepsi sponsors little league teams, softball teams and other types of youth athletics. John Faloan, President, says, "If someone's kid is on a ball team, it becomes a Pepsi team. It's important to me if it's important to them." The company has been in the Vecchie family since 1941 and currently employs 75 people.



2016 Henson Robinson Company

Henson Robinson has earned its reputation as a leader in the roofing, architectural sheet metal, heating, cooling, ventilation, plumbing, mechanical and special sheet metal fabrication industries. The company uses its success to give back to the community, regularly supporting local causes. Employees are rewarded for their hard work as they receive excellent benefits, opportunities for advancement, and annual celebrations.

2016 Horace Mann

Horace Mann's number one priority is taking care of its base as they help educators protect what they have today and prepare for a successful tomorrow. Employees are offered flexible work schedules and opportunities for advancement. The community benefits from their success as it supports many causes including United Way, Toys for Tots, and more.



2016 St. Joseph's Home

St. Joseph's Home provides high-quality and compassionate care for those who can no longer take care of themselves. The staff cares for the residents as if they were their own parents or grandparents, and are rewarded for their efforts in many ways including holiday parties and recognition on birthdays and anniversaries. Everyone there is like family.

The Leader of Community Banking



MEDICAL NEWS

Prairie Heart Institute opening heart failure center

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Prairie Heart Institute of Illinois is planning a new state-of-the-art treatment center for heart patients within the existing facility at HSHS St. John's Hospital in Springfield.

The center is aimed at reducing the need for inpatient care by managing congestive heart failure.

Dr. Mark Stampehl is director of Heart Failure Service for Prairie Cardiovascular, the physician group which operates out of Prairie Heart Institute at St. John's. Stampehl says the new Prairie Cardiovascular Heart Failure Center, which is scheduled for a ribbon cutting on Feb. 23, will feature instant access for heart patients and cutting-edge technology.

The center focuses on congestive heart failure, which occurs when fluid builds up around the heart and significantly restricts its ability to pump blood. Stampehl says congestive heart failure can mean insufficient blood flow to meet the body's metabolic demand, and symptoms can include shortness of breath, swelling, fatigue and more. The condition ultimately means a reduced quality of life, he says.

Establishing the new center allows patients with congestive heart failure same-day or next-day access to treatment without being admitted to the hospital, Stampehl says. He explains that the typical treatment for this condition is a diuretic pill to prevent water retention. Over time, a patient's body may no longer respond to the pills, requiring hospitalization. The six dedicated exam rooms in the new center will be equipped to provide the same intravenous diuretic

treatment normally found in a hospital setting, but as an outpatient procedure instead.

Doctors in the center will work with a team of pharmacists, dieticians, social workers and certified heart failure nurses to quickly treat patients, Stampehl says. He adds that the center will be located in an existing space a few steps inside the door of Prairie Heart Institute, taking into consideration the shortness of breath that can accompany congestive heart failure.

"This has been in the idea stage for some time," Stampehl said. "We've been fortunate to gain grant funding to retrofit an old space that wasn't being optimally utilized."

The new center will also offer CardioMEMS, a remote monitoring technology developed at St. Jude's Children's Hospital. A small sensor which requires no battery is implanted in the patient's pulmonary artery, sending a wireless signal to a station connected via Internet to the new center. If the patient's heart rate or blood pressure exceed certain parameters, a doctor is alerted.

"The technology allows us to do ICU-level monitoring in a patient's home," Stampehl said. "We can very carefully detect early exacerbation."

Research will also be conducted at the center, both as part of national, multi-clinic trials, and as part of Prairie Heart Institute's own ongoing research.

According to Stampehl, the new center will be the first one of its kind in the area.

"No other center in central Illinois or southern Illinois is doing this," he said. "This is usually only available in major metropolitan areas, so we're really glad to be offering it." ♦



Dr. Mark Stampehl

PHOTO / COURTESY OF PRAIRIE CARDIOVASCULAR

A healthier neighborhood

Enos Park sees improvements

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Although Enos Park sits next to Springfield's thriving medical district, the neighborhood has long struggled with health. However, the first year of a joint effort between Springfield medical providers has shown promise to improve health in one of the city's most vulnerable neighborhoods.

The Enos Park Access to Care Collaborative is a partnership between Memorial Health System, HSHS St. John's Hospital and SIU Medicine, with cooperation from the Enos Park Neighborhood Improvement Association and others. Focused on improving the health of Enos Park residents, the program goes beyond simple medical care, touching on several

environmental and social factors that greatly affect overall health.

On Jan. 16, the collaborative announced the results of its first-year efforts, including a higher employment rate, decreased crime, fewer unnecessary emergency room visits and greater health insurance coverage.

"The first year has been remarkably successful," said SIU project director Tracey Smith. "We not only met our initial goals to make our clients self-sufficient, but we addressed other needs, such as housing and referrals to social service agencies."

The program is funded with \$500,000 donated by the hospitals. A total of 111 Enos Park residents enrolled in the program, receiving help from three community care workers with obtaining health insurance, getting access to dental care, mental health care and primary medical care, and covering basic necessities like housing, food and clothing. The program also provided a bike

club, summer enrichment activities and holiday celebrations for the residents.

The Community Health Needs Assessment for Sangamon County, a public poll undertaken by the University of Illinois-Springfield, helped the medical providers establish the needs of Enos Park, which struggles with relatively high rates of unemployment, poverty and homelessness.

"We launched the Enos Park initiative as a way to improve access to health care, but the success we've seen goes beyond what we anticipated," said Kim Luz, divisional director of community outreach for HSHS St. John's Hospital. "This initiative is addressing social determinants of health, including access to housing, transportation, food, jobs and neighborhood safety. Meeting these basic human needs is vital to population health improvement. The Enos Park Access Collaborative is not only improving access to health care but it is enabling our clients to

achieve sustainable health."

As a result of the program, residents received 151 referrals to social service agencies. They made 290 doctor visits accompanied by a community health worker, 44 mental health appointments and 40 dental appointments. In total, residents made 339 primary care appointments through the program, representing a decrease in unnecessary emergency room visits.

"The results from the first year of the Enos Park Access to Care Collaborative have far exceeded our expectations," said Ed Curtis, president and CEO of Memorial Health System. "We are encouraged by the outcomes for the first year of the program and the new collaborations that are developing to address community health issues. This success is a credit to the collaborative efforts of the SIU Center for Family Medicine, HSHS St. John's Hospital and Memorial Medical Center." ♦

Memorial nurse wins national award

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

A nurse at Memorial Medical Center in Springfield recently won a national award for her compassionate care. Registered nurse Brittany Gallivan won the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses in January, in recognition of nurses who provide exceptional care to patients. DAISY stands for “Diseases Attacking the Immune System,” in reference to Patrick Barnes, a man who died of an auto-immune

disease in 1999. The award was created by Barnes’ family through the DAISY Foundation.

Gallivan had been nominated for the award twice before. The nomination that earned her the award this time came from the family of a patient whose father needed care. The anonymous nomination said all of the nurses at Memorial were “outstanding, especially Brittany.”

“She has made our stay at Memorial so much more tolerable,” the nomination said.

“She has been patient with us and answered all of our, at times ridiculous, questions without judgment. She explains everything perfectly and so that we understand. ... Her ability to make us feel at ease with her demeanor, as well as sometimes just her presence, is outstanding. We would like to nominate her not only because she deserves it, but also because we can never find a way to thank her enough or show our full appreciation in a way that she deserves.” ♦

Memorial Medical Center holding free seminar on artery health

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Memorial Medical Center is hosting a free seminar on heart attack and stroke prevention by promoting artery health. The two-hour program features Dr. Craig A. Backs, an internal medicine physician

from Springfield. Backs’ interactive discussion will cover new ways to detect arterial disease, improve the health of arteries and prevent heart attacks and strokes.


The seminar, “Making Future Strokes and Heart Attacks a Thing of the Past,” is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 1

in the M.G. Nelson Family Auditorium at the Memorial Center for Learning and Innovation, 228 W. Miller St. For more information or to register, visit memorialmedical.com or call 788-3333. ♦

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Good eats at Groovy Duck

BY THOMAS C. PAVLIK JR.
Freelance Contributor

The latest entrant into Springfield’s crowded Asian restaurant scene is Groovy Duck, located in Capital City Shopping Center. Groovy Duck opened in August of 2016 and offers a slight, but welcome, twist to what we’ve come to expect in Springfield.

Groovy Duck holds itself out as offering a Hibachi grill, sushi and noodles. No buffet, no salad bar, no huge menu with all of the Americanized standards.

My guest and I arrived just before noon. The restaurant was about a quarter filled. Our fellow diners weren’t the typical business crowd, but rather appeared to be a more social set. I imagine that Groovy Duck draws a larger dinner business, which is a shame, as it’s a good lunch.

There’s an exposed ceiling and Asian touches throughout – including hints of a simulated pagoda and a nice bar. Seating consists of booths, tables and seats around the Hibachi grill. The day we visited nobody tried the Hibachi, but the chef was turning some take out from its grill.

On the downside, it’s hard to visit Groovy Duck and not leave smelling like fried food. But that’s the price you pay for dining at this genre of restaurant.

The lunch menu is compact, but the full menu is also available. Lunch options include the Hibachi lunch (\$10.25 to \$16.50 – soup, house salad, mixed vegetables and your choice of protein grilled tableside, with white rice), the bento box (\$8.95 for one protein, \$12.95 for

two – soup, house salad, white rice, cooked vegetables, a dumpling and a California roll), and the Lunch Combo (\$10.95 – choice of ramen, choice of sushi roll, house salad, soup and a drink). Beyond that, there’s a large selection of sushi rolls, sashimi, fried rice and traditional appetizers.

We decided to start with the bluefin tuna and octopus sushi (\$2.50 and \$2.25 per piece, respectively). They were good, but not great. I appreciated the healthy helping of tuna, but found the rice to be a bit past its prime.

For lunch we went with the bento box and the lunch combo. After ordering, it couldn’t have been but a minute before our salad and soups appeared.

The soup was a pleasing broth with diced scallions and mushroom slices. It was perfect to warm the soul on a cold winter’s day. The salad was primarily iceberg lettuce with a homemade dressing. I found it to be overdressed, but my guest appreciated its play between sweetness and tartness. In any event, it paired well with the soup. Think twice, however, before eating them both as Groovy Duck’s portions are quite large and you risk not having enough room for your main dish.

Just as we were finishing our soup and salad, the server appeared with our main dishes – perfect timing.

The lunch combo consisted of a very large soup bowl filled with chunks of duck (chicken, pork, seafood and veggie also available) with a heaping portion of ramen noodles. I had opted for the meat broth, but a milder miso option is also available. My dish was rounded out with

a spicy tuna roll. But any number of Groovy Duck’s “classic” rolls can be selected. All in all, especially with the soup and salad, this was a lot of food for \$10.95.

As with the starter sushi, I found the spicy tuna roll rice to be a bit stale. Interestingly, Groovy Duck added some greens alongside the spicy tuna, as well as something crunchy that I couldn’t identify. I didn’t mind it, but I didn’t think it was an improvement of one of my favorite sushi dishes.

The ramen broth was rich and flavorful. The duck was nicely cooked with the fat rendered out. I could have used a few more pieces, but given the overall portion sizes and reasonable price, this was a small nit. The noodles were cooked just right and managed to absorb some of the broth’s flavor. Overall, this was a very good dish.

My guest who ordered the bento box opted for teriyaki steak and salmon. The salmon was reported as overly oily but otherwise tasted fine. As with my duck, he would have appreciated a slightly larger serving of the proteins. He also commented that the veggies were slightly cold, but on the other hand, his rice was piping hot, fluffy and obviously just made. The California roll appeared to contain faux crab – but I suspect that’s true of virtually all of these rolls. It equaled, but did not surpass, its peers. The dumpling was an unexpected surprise and contained a delectable nugget of fried shrimp. He reported it as the best bite of his meal.

Service was friendly and spot on. We both appreciated that the entire Groovy Duck team pitched in to make sure food was delivered

quickly from the kitchen and that our drink glasses were full. Someone spent some time training the entire staff and it showed.

Groovy Duck’s location on South Dirksen makes it off the beaten path for much of Springfield’s business crowd. But, thanks to its efficient service, inclusive of transit time you can swing this one in just over an hour.

Groovy Duck gave us a good, but not superlative, lunch with very generous helpings at a reasonable price. That’s hard to beat today, so we plan on coming back. ♦

Thomas C. Pavlik is an attorney with Delano Law Offices LLC in Springfield.

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SPOTLIGHT



PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

TIFFANY SIMMONS

TITLE:	executive director, Community Connection Point
EDUCATION:	M.A. in organizational leadership from Lincoln Christian University
FAMILY:	Husband – David; Children – Aliyah and Urijah
FAVORITES:	Book: <i>The Bible, The Purpose-Driven Life</i> ; Restaurant: Arlington's; Sports team: St. Louis Cardinals
TIDBITS:	Love running outdoors; Collects children's books; Plays the flute

BY ERIC WOODS
Freelance Contributor

Having moved to Springfield in 2005, Tiffany Simmons has found a city where she and her family can call home.

"There is so much wisdom here, so much history," she said. "I love the stories of Springfield."

Simmons is executive director of Community Connection Point, a social service agency which helps families in need find affordable child care and other services. Simmons has always loved children. When she was a child herself, her goal was to be a kindergarten teacher and a mother. At age 14, she started her own babysitting business in which she worked with seven families. She had a calendar and treated it like her own small business. Simmons taught in an internship program during college, but ultimately decided a teaching career was not for her.

Now, however, Simmons is again able to work with children through her job at Community Connection Point.

"We are a point in the community where people can come and connect with the resources they need," she said.

Simmons wears a number of hats, which includes working with partners and hiring people with great character.

"I like to find what they do best and figure out the ways to bring out those qualities," she said. "When people love what they do, it helps them to serve better."

Finding new and innovative ways to help families is important to Simmons. She is heavily involved in the Kindergarten Readiness initiative, which includes two programs: Ready to Learn and Ready for Tomorrow.

"We want to empower them to be the change they need," Simmons said. "We are also taking a different look at how the

community can help other than fundraising. How can we get the community to invest in something that means something to them? How can they use their abilities?"

A new mobile office program called Connection Point was recently rolled out to assist families which are dealing with time constraints.

"We heard from families that the biggest barrier is time," Simmons said. "So we worked with Computer Banc to get mobile offices put together that will offer the same services as we do in the office. We will find where the families are and come to them."

Simmons has seen quite a bit of opportunity in this city and feels there is always something to do. However, the one issue Simmons sees in Springfield is uncertainty.

"We are in a time of transition, and I think that a lot of things we have grown accustomed to are changing," she said. "That creates fear in people, but also opportunity."

Simmons is a member of Koke Mill Christian Church, United Way, and is involved in Springfield Christian School where her children attend. Her husband, David, is a firefighter, so the family assists with events surrounding the Springfield Fire Department.

Although she is far from retirement, Simmons already has a major bucket list item for herself and her husband.

"We want to see a baseball game in every major league stadium," she said.

As far as her career, Simmons wants to find the next leader who has as much excitement and innovative ideas as she has, and she would also love to reconnect with some of the children she worked with once they grow up.

"I want to talk to the 30-year-old preschooler and ask, 'what inspired you?'" she said. "What stuck with you?" ♦

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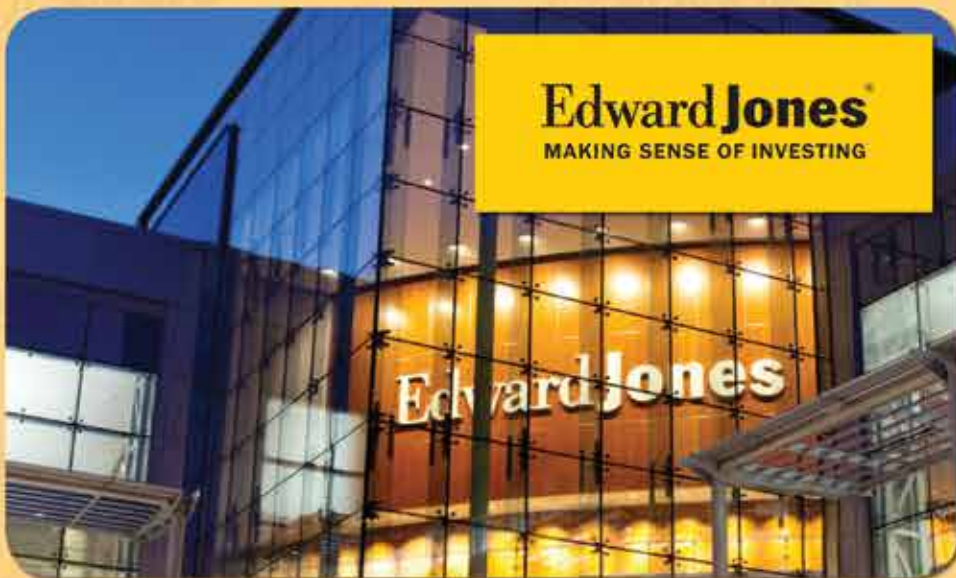
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