

SPRINGFIELD
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JOURNAL

September 2026



Q&A with Dr. Ian B.K. Martin
New dean for SIU School of Medicine

Memorial gets zoning for west-side property

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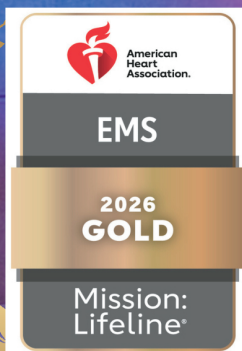


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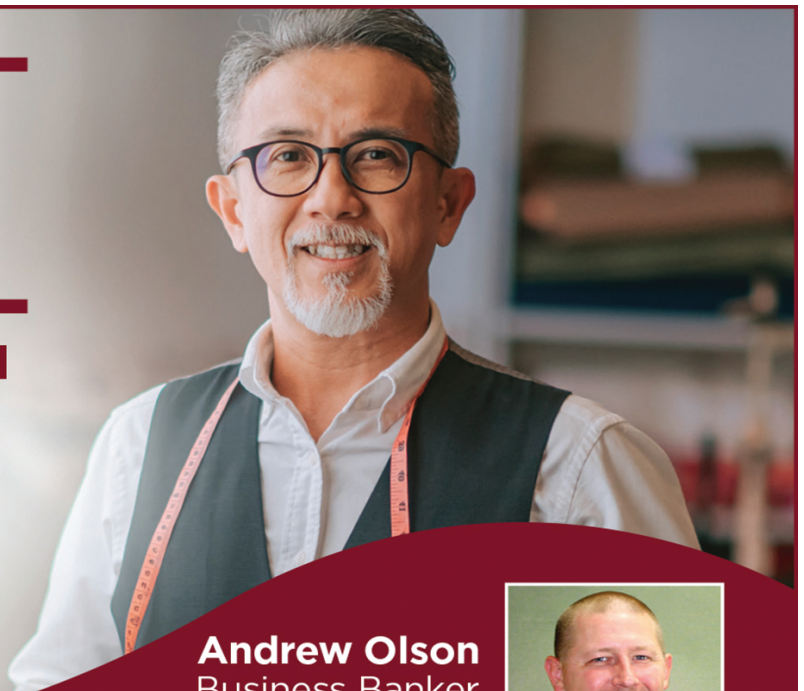
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A fresh start

Even as adults, most of us can remember what it felt like to start a new school year. We had a carefully selected outfit and fresh haircut combined with a backpack full of yet-to-be-sharpened pencils. But mostly, we had another chance – to meet a teacher who did not yet know our bad habits and shortcomings, to make new friends, to be a slightly better version of ourselves than the year before.

This month's issue of SBJ focuses on healthcare and profiles Dr. Ian B.K. Martin, who starts his role as the new dean and provost of SIU School of Medicine on Sept. 1, in addition to serving as the CEO of SIU Medicine (p. 6). Martin notes that the leadership roles at all four of Springfield's major medical institutions have changed hands within the past 18 months (Mandy Eaton became the new CEO of Memorial Health in April 2025, followed by Brian Brennan starting as the CEO of HSHS St John's Hospital in May 2025 and Rebecca Birenbaum being named CEO of Springfield Clinic in March). While each of these leaders will undoubtedly build on their own institution's legacy, there is also an unusual opportunity to collectively have a fresh perspective.

The Mid-Illinois Medical District, created more than two decades ago, has not lived up to its potential. State Sen. Doris Turner has indicated she plans to try again to pass legislation this fall that would expand both the boundaries and scope of the district. That could lead to new opportunities, if there can be more focus on collaboration and less on competition.

There is also an opportunity to expand and improve mental health services in the county. In March, voters approved a ballot referendum to establish a countywide 708 Mental Health Board funded by a 0.5% tax increase. It is expected to distribute around \$14 million annually, and the newly created Sangamon County Mental Health board will have to work closely with the medical institutions.

Significant challenges are ahead, such as the major Medicaid restructuring under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which is expected to lead to rising uncompensated care and disproportionately affect smaller and rural medical facilities. And recent limits on federal student loan borrowing for medical students is anticipated to have more impact on physicians seeking to practice in areas such as central Illinois (p. 22).

In addition to providing critical services for our residents, healthcare is the backbone of Sangamon County's economy, tying our community's success closely to the viability and growth of these four medical institutions. Here's hoping that the new leaders all bring the same energy and enthusiasm that our children are bringing to the first day of school.



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A portrait of Dr. Ian B.K. Martin, a middle-aged Black man with short hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red patterned tie. A small gold pin is on his lapel. The background is a blurred staircase with white steps and dark railings.

a
Q & A
with
Dr. Ian B.K. Martin

By David Blanchette

Dr. Ian B. K. Martin has been named the new dean and provost of the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine and chief executive officer of SIU Medicine, the school's faculty practice. Martin comes to SIU from the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, where he served as eminent scholar, professor with tenure and system chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine, as well as associate provost and senior associate dean in the office of faculty affairs and leadership.

After earning degrees from Duke University, the Medical College of Pennsylvania-Hahnemann School of Medicine and the University of North Carolina's Keenan-Flagler Business School, Martin completed residency training in emergency medicine and general internal medicine at the University of Maryland Medical Center and R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center. He later served as chief resident there. Before joining the Medical College of Wisconsin, Martin served in progressive leadership positions as a faculty member at Duke University School of Medicine, the University of North Carolina School of Medicine and West Virginia University School of Medicine.

Martin will be the fifth dean of the SIU School of Medicine, succeeding the retiring Dr. Jerry Kruse.

Where were you born and raised, and what was your first job?

I was born in Washington, D.C., but spent most of my time growing up in the suburbs on the Maryland side. My first job was at a hardware store, and I also stocked shoes at the Thom McAn shoe store in the mall.

What drew you to the medical profession?

I always had an interest in science and engineering, but I loved people, too. What moved me away from science and engineering into medicine was, unfortunately, when I lost my mother unexpectedly when I was 14 years old. I recall that feeling of helplessness, and, at that point, I said to myself that while I couldn't help my mother, I could help others in a similar situation.

How did you become interested in the SIU School of Medicine position?

I was approached by a firm that was handling the search for the SIU position. When I read the prospectus about the opportunity, it immediately spoke to me for a couple of reasons. The opportunity to simultaneously serve as the provost for the campus, the dean of the medical school and the chief executive officer of the faculty practice is a highly integrated and rare way to construct a leadership role. I think this really allows for nimbleness and leadership within an organization, and that was very attractive to me. The other was that SIU is clearly a mission-driven organization, and that spoke to a lot of the things that I value in leadership and healthcare.

How can we teach medical students to relate to a population that often gets erroneous and harmful advice on healthcare from social media?

It's a matter of exposure. I think SIU has done a great job of this, getting our students outside the four walls of the school and into the community so they can meet people where they are, understand the challenges that face them and why they believe the things that they do. Once you do that, you're in a much better position to be able to shape those things for our patients and provide better care.

Do schools of medicine need to encourage medical students to serve underserved and rural communities, and if so, how can that be done?

The unequivocal answer is yes. Often the areas of greatest need are rural environments. I think all medical schools should make it one of their priorities to attract and prepare



Dr. Ian B.K. Martin and his wife, Dr. Erica M. Arrington.
PHOTO COURTESY MARTIN FAMILY

students to practice in areas of need. One of the important ways you can do that is by providing early exposure to the actual community as part of the curriculum. Otherwise, if you're not from a rural community, you may have a lot of misperceptions about what it means to live and work in those environments.

How has your experience with teaching emergency medicine prepared you to head a medical school like SIU?

Emergency medicine specialists are the front-line clinicians in the American health system, which is under tremendous strain. In many ways I get to see the very best and the very worst of humanity and healthcare. Our patients are some of the most vulnerable, and people who choose to specialize in emergency medicine are mission-driven folks. I think that having a background in taking care of our most vulnerable and in-need patients really aligns nicely with the culture and focus of a school like SIU.

How will you work to strengthen clinical partnerships with SIU School of Medicine?

Many local healthcare organizations, including SIU, have gone through leadership changes in the past year and a half, and many of the folks who have been appointed to the senior-most positions at these institu-

tions have been attracted from around the country.

This presents a tremendous opportunity to bring new ways of thinking about healthcare in the region. I understand that a number of organizations like SIU really want to grow, and I think we can grow best if we grow together. There will be many areas in which we'll collaborate with other organizations. That spirit of collaboration is a win-win for all of us, and especially for patients.

What does the future of healthcare look like for a region like central Illinois?

I think it's bright. If we capitalize on some of those collaborations, I believe we can provide more critical services to patients in the region. An important role SIU can play is that we are the academic entity, which presents an opportunity to attract the best and brightest across all specialties. That allows us to provide the best clinical services in partnership with HSHS St. John's, Memorial Health and others to further elevate the quality of care in the area. We really could make good on some of the promises and ideas that I've heard from leaders of these other organizations.

Do you intend to become involved during your non-working hours in the Springfield community?

I don't know how many non-working hours the dean, provost and CEO really has, but the answer is yes. I have been very engaged in the Milwaukee community on local boards like the Milwaukee Tennis and Education Foundation that uses tennis to teach life skills to at-risk, inner-city youth. I have also been involved with the Milwaukee Urban League. I am most proud of my six years of volunteer service on the city of Milwaukee Board of Health. I was honored by the mayor who proclaimed July 23, 2026, as Dr. Ian B.K. Martin Day. I can't wait to see how I can fit into and serve the Springfield community.

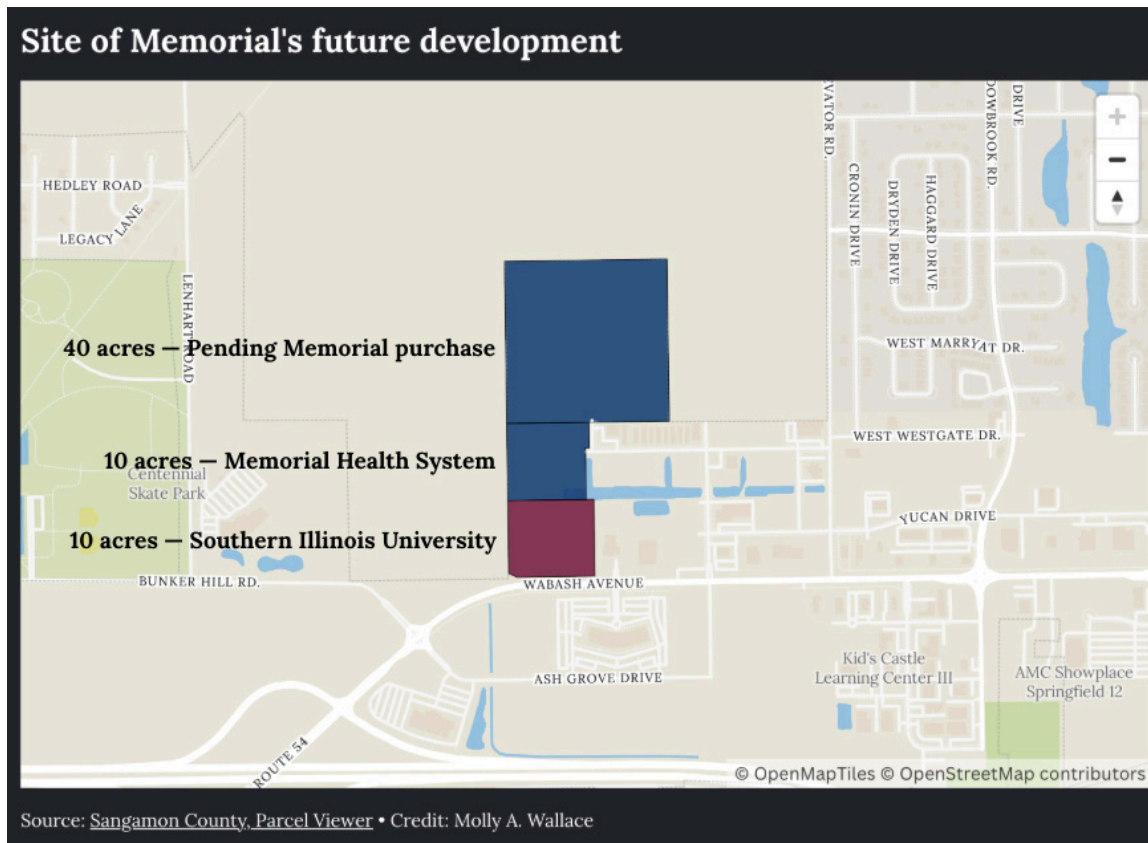
What may people be surprised to learn about you?

I fashion myself a bit of a Renaissance man. Science and medicine are a left-brain activity, but I'm a right-brain person, too. I love languages and the arts, and I'm a painter myself. SBJ

Memorial gets approval to develop west-side property

City Council approves rezoning of 40 acres adjacent to existing land owned by Memorial, SIU

By Molly Wallace



The Springfield City Council has approved the reclassification of 40 acres of vacant farmland on the southwest side of the city, clearing the way for future development by Memorial Health System. The property will now be zoned as a highway business service district meant for commercial establishments.

The property is located near the intersection of Wabash Avenue and Archer Elevator Road next to Green Nissan. Its southern edge adjoins 10 acres already owned by Memorial, which in turn shares a southern border with 10 acres owned by Southern Illinois University Medicine.

Memorial has a contract to purchase the 40-acre property from its current owner, Kinscherff Properties LLC, in November after the fall harvest. At the Aug. 19 City Council meeting, Ward 10 Ald. Ralph Hanauer, who represents the area, made a motion to make the rezoning contingent on the property purchase being completed within one year. His motion was unanimously approved, as

was the rezoning request.

Robert Ellison, vice president of business development and strategy execution for Memorial, said the purchase is a "strategic buy" and that the health system has "no definitive plans" for developing the land yet.

Memorial's zoning petition noted anticipated frontage on Bradfordton Road, citing a planned extension of the road. Engineering firm Greene & Bradford previously published a notice in 2016 that it was contracted to complete the Bradfordton extension connecting Old Jacksonville Road to Wabash Avenue by Property 21, LLC, which used to own the 20 acres currently held by Memorial and SIU.

Those 20 acres were donated to Memorial by John Pruitt, owner of E.L. Pruitt Mechanical Contracting Services, in 2023. Memorial then donated half of that land to SIU.

Steven Sandstrom, the communications coordinator for the Office of Public Affairs in SIU's

School of Medicine, said SIU has no current plans for developing its 10 acres.

"Our current focus is evaluating our existing real estate portfolio from a property management perspective to ensure we are well-positioned for future institutional needs," Sandstrom said. "Therefore, we aren't in a position to commit to specific timelines or future uses for the property."

Ellison said any future development of Memorial's land would probably happen in the next five to 10 years.

"Until we have a project, we will continue to have that land farmed," Ellison said.

Molly Wallace is a graduate student at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, specializing in investigative journalism. She is taking part in an internship with Illinois Times.



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HOSPITALS

Sources: The hospitals.
Ranked by number of inpatient admissions.

	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE/WEBSITE	NUMBER OF LICENSED HOSPITAL BEDS	INPATIENT ADMISSIONS (2025)	OCCUPANCY RATE	FY 2025 OPERATING BUDGET (MILLIONS)	TOTAL STAFF (FULL TIME EQUIVALENT)	ADMINISTRATOR	AFFILIATION	YEAR EST'D
1	Springfield Memorial Hospital 701 N. First St. Springfield, IL 62781	217-788-3000 memorial.health	500	22,852	75.6%	\$822	3,070	Evan Davis interim CEO	Memorial Health	1897
2	HSHS St. John's Hospital 800 E. Carpenter St. Springfield, IL 62769	217-544-6464 st-johns.org	442	21,236	93%	\$695	2,550	Brian Brennan president and CEO	Hospital Sisters Health System	1875
3	Lincoln Prairie Behavioral Health Center 5230 S. Sixth St. Road Springfield, IL 62703	217-585-1180 lincolnpairiebhc.com	97	2,500	82%	DND	135	Tom DeMarco CEO	Universal Health Services	2008
4	Jacksonville Memorial Hospital 1600 W. Walnut St. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-9541 memorial.health	25	2,115	77.2%	\$126	527	Trevor Huffman, president and CEO	Memorial Health	1875

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Sources: The Physician Groups. DND - Did Not Disclose.
Ranked by total number of physicians.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE / WEBSITE	PARTNERS / PRINCIPALS	HOURS OF OPERATION	TYPE OF CLINIC	NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS	TOTAL # OF EMPLOYEES	SPECIALTIES	YEAR EST'D
1	SIU Medicine Center for Family Medicine, 520 N. Fourth St. Ear Nose and Throat Clinic Hearing and Balance Center, 720 N. Bond St. Internal Medicine Clinic, 751 N. Rutledge St. Maternal-Fetal Medicine, 419 N. Ninth St. Neuroscience Institute at SIU, 751 N. Rutledge St. OB-GYN Clinic, 400 N. Ninth St. and 1100 Lincolnshire Blvd. Pediatrics, 400 N. Ninth St. Psychiatry Clinic, 319 E. Madison Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Clinics, 319 E. Madison Simmons Cancer Institute at SIU, 315 W. Carpenter St. Surgery Clinics, 747 N. Rutledge St. Institute for Plastic Surgery at SIU, 747 N. Rutledge St. SIU Cosmetic Clinic, 747 N. Rutledge St. SIU Fertility and IVF Center, 751 N. Rutledge St. Women's Health Center, 610 N. Westgate, Jacksonville Psychiatry, 1600 W. Walnut St., Jacksonville Center for Family Medicine, 425 E. State St., Jacksonville Dale and Deborah Smith Center for Alzheimer's Research and Treatment, 751 N. Rutledge St.	217-545-8000 siumed.org	Ian B.K. Martin, M.D., CEO Michelle Lynn, R.N., COO Vidhya Prakash, M.D., CMO	Mon-Fri, 8am-4:30pm	Primary care, specialties and subspecialties including surgical treatments.	450	2,463	A variety of health care services including primary care, specialties and sub-specialties. For a list of services, make an appointment or to view provider profiles online, visit siumed.org.	1970
2	Springfield Clinic Main Campus, 1025 S. Sixth St. 800 Bldg, 800 N. First St. 900 Bldg, 900 N. First St. Carpenter, 401 E. Carpenter St. Cath Lab, 1025 S. Sixth St. Center for Plastic Surgery, 2901 Greenbriar Dr. Chiropractic, 355 W. Carpenter St., Suite A Dermatology-Monroe, 1100 Centre West Dr. Downtown Drive-Up Lab, 1351 S. Eighth St. HSHS St. John's Health Center, 1100 E. Lincolnshire Blvd. HSHS St. John's Pavilion, 800 E. Carpenter St. Jacksonville-MOHA, 1000 W. Morton Ave. Jacksonville, 15 Founders Lane Koke Mill, 901 S. Koke Mill Road MOHA, 775 Engineering Dr. Optical Centre West Wabash, 4525 Wabash Ave. Optical Centre, 1025 S. Sixth St. Orthopedics Walk-In Jacksonville, 15 Founders Ln. Orthopedics Walk-In, 800 N. First St. Pediatrics, 3501 Old Jacksonville Road Rehabilitation Services-Sherman, 129 Ilini Dr. Rehabilitation Services-Monroe, 2325 W. Monroe St. Rehabilitation Services-West Wabash, 4525 Wabash Ave. Rehabilitation Services, 3020 S. Sixth St. Springfield Clinic Dome, 3751 Imagineer Dr., Bldg. 1, Ste. C Sherman, 400 St. John's Dr., Sherman Springfield Surgery Center, 1025 S. Sixth St. Urgent Care - Main, 1025 S. Sixth St. Urgent Care Jacksonville - 1000 W. Morton Ave. Urgent Care Sherman, 400 St. John's Dr. Urgent Care West Wabash, 2200 Wabash Ave. Urgent Care Plus, 350 W. Carpenter St.	217-528-7541 800-444-7541 SpringfieldClinic.com	Rebecca Birenbaum, CEO Kenneth Sagins, MD, FAAP, CMO Christopher Wottowa, MD, Board Chair	All clinic facilities are open 8am-5pm unless noted below. Orthopedics Walk-In Clinic Springfield, Mon-Fri 8am-5pm, Sat 8-11am Orthopedics Walk-In Clinic Jacksonville Mon-Fri 8am-4pm Urgent Care Main, 1025 S. Sixth St., Mon-Thurs 8am-6pm Urgent Care Jacksonville, West and Sherman Mon-Sun 8am-6pm (excluding major holidays) Urgent Care Plus Mon-Sun 7am-6pm	Primary and specialty care, ancillary services, ortho walk-in clinic, surgical treatments, cath lab, urgent care, urgent care plus and telehealth.	367	3,700	Serving 20 counties across central Illinois, from everyday primary care to 80-plus specialties, walk-in orthopedics, sports medicine and rehab, bariatric, diabetes, breast cancer and bone health centers, Urgent Care Plus for advanced same-day needs, cardiac cath lab with leading-edge treatment, virtual visits and after-hours TeleNurse line, on-site pharmacy, optical center and medical spa.	1939
3	HSHS Medical Group Internal Medicine (Patients 64+), 2801 Mathers Rd. Family Medicine & Pediatrics, 125 E. Plummer Blvd., Suite A, Chatham Family Medicine & Pediatrics, 1745 W. Walnut St., Jacksonville Family Medicine, 300 Sattley St., Rochester Family Medicine, 806 E. Andrew Rd., Sherman Foot & Ankle Specialists - 1745 W. Walnut St., Jacksonville and 2901 Old Jacksonville Rd., Suite C Hospitalist Program, HSHS St. John's, 800 E. Carpenter St. Intensivist Program, HSHS St. John's, 800 E. Carpenter St. Diabetes & Endocrinology, 118 Legacy Pointe Dr. Multispecialty Care and Multispecialty Care Pediatrics, 2901 Old Jacksonville Rd. Neuroscience Specialty Clinic, 1745 W. Walnut St., Jacksonville Priority Care, 1836 S. MacArthur Blvd.	217-698-9722 HSHS.org	Hospital Sisters Health System Leanne M. Yanni, MD, MHCM President & CEO Illinois Physician Enterprise	Visit hshs.org for location specific hours	Primary Care and Specialty Care	300	700	Medical Group with primary care and specialty care services. Including family medicine, pediatric, podiatry, orthopedics, neurology, endocrinology, urology, cardiovascular and other specialists. Urgent care, walk-in care, and ancillary services such as labs, imaging and other care programs. HSHS also offers corporate wellness and occupational health.	2009



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SIU MEDICINE

PHYSICIAN GROUPS

Sources: The Physician Groups. DND - Did Not Disclose.
Ranked by total number of physicians.

	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE /WEBSITE	PARTNERS/PRINCIPALS	HOURS OF OPERATION	TYPE OF CLINIC	NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS	TOTAL # OF EMPLOYEES	SPECIALTIES	YEAR EST'D
4	Memorial Care Primary Care in Chatham: 101 E. Plummer Blvd., Chatham Primary Care and Urgent Care on Koke Mill: 3132 Old Jacksonville Rd, Springfield Primary Care on North Dirksen: 3220 Atlanta St., Springfield Primary Care and Urgent Care on South Sixth: 2950 S. Sixth St., Springfield South Sixth Street Drive-Thru: 2950 S. Sixth St., Springfield Primary Care on Founders: 15 Founders Lane, Ste. 100, Jacksonville Urgent Care on Morton: 901 W. Morton Ave., Ste. 22, Jacksonville	memorial.health	Memorial Health	Visit Memorial. health for hours.	Primary Care, Ancillary Services, Virtual Care	118 Physicians and Advanced Practice Providers	635	Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Urgent Care, Lab and Imaging, Virtual Care	1994
5	Prairie Cardiovascular Consultants 619 E. Mason St.	217-788-0706 hshs.org/heart	Hospital Sisters Health System Ziad F. Issa, MD, Executive Medical Director for Prairie Cardiovascular	Visit hshs.org/heart for location specific hours	Cardiology and Vascular Experts	105	350	General and Preventative Cardiology, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Coronary Artery Disease, Emergency Heart Care, Heart Failure, Heart Rhythm Disorders, Valvular and Structural Heart Disease, Vascular Disease	1979
6	Memorial Specialty Care Behavioral Health & Psychiatry: 3225 Hedley Road, Springfield; Memorial Wellness Center in Springfield: 320 E. Carpenter St., Springfield; Memorial Wound Care in Springfield: 901 N. First St., Springfield; Memorial Pain Clinic in Springfield: 501 N. First St. Springfield	memorial.health	Memorial Health	Visit memorial. health for hours.	Specialty Care, Ancillary Services	58 Physicians and Advanced Practice Providers	220	Behavioral Health and Psychiatry, Wellness, Pain, Wound.	1999
7	Prairie Eye and LASIK Center 2020 W. Iles Ave., Springfield 2000 W. Morton Ave., Jacksonville	217-698-3030 prairieeyecenter.com	Sandra Yeh, M.D. Medical Director	Mon-Fri 8am-5pm may vary by site	Ophthalmology, Optometry, Optical Center, Spa	16	95	LASIK and Refractive Surgery, Cataract Surgery, Retina, General Ophthalmology, Oculoplastics, Optometry and BOTOX Cosmetic and Dysport injections.	1970
8	Orthopedic Center of Illinois 1301 S. Koke Mill Road	217-547-9100 orthocenterillinois.com	D. Gordon Allan, MD Dane Church, MD G. Victor Gibson, DO Christopher Graves, MD Barry Mulshine, MD Varun Sharma, MD Timothy VanFleet, MD	Mon-Fri 8am-5pm Sat 8am-12pm	Orthopedics, Imaging, Physical Therapy, Medicine, Walk-in Clinic	13	125	Joint Reconstruction, Spine Surgery, Fracture and Injuries, Foot/Ankles, Upper Extremities, Sports Medicine, Interventional Pain Management, Imaging, Physical Therapy, Minimally Invasive Surgery. Neurosurgery.	1972
9	Central Counties Health Centers 2239 E. Cook St. 700 N. Seventh St. (dental only) Clinic for the homeless: 2200 Schale St.	217-788-2300 (Springfield main) 217-788-2380 (Dental Clinic Seventh Street)	Heather Burton, President and CEO	Hours vary according to site. Call 788-2300 for specific site hours.	Primary Care Dental Care Behavioral Health	8	75	Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Internal Medicine, Dental, Behavioral Health. On-site laboratory.	1999
10	Gailey Eye Clinic 1401 S. Koke Mill Road	217-529-3937 gaileyeyeclinic.com	Angela Oberreiter, O.D. Joseph Harman, M.D. Julie Hendricks, O.D.	Mon-Fri 8am-5pm Sat. by appt. only	Eye Care Center, Ophthalmology, Optometry, Optical Boutique	3	25	Routine Eye Exams, Contact Lens/Glasses, Cataract Surgery, LASIK, Treatment of Eye Disease including Diabetic Retinopathy, Glaucoma, Dry Eye and Emergent Eye Care.	1941

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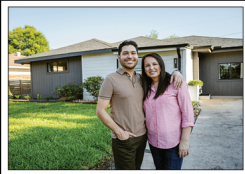
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Sources: The Fitness Centers, DND - Did Not Disclose.
Ranked by number of members.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE / WEBSITE / EMAIL	# OF EMPLOYEES	# OF MEMBERS	HOURS OF OPERATION	MANAGER(S)	AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT / AMENITIES	YEAR EST'D
1	YMCA of Springfield Gus and Flora Kerasotes 4550 W. Iles Ave. Springfield, IL 62711	217-679-1625 springfieldymca.org asowle@springfieldymca.org kprimus@springfieldymca.org jgreenwood@springfieldymca.org	200	20,000	5am-9pm Mon.-Thu., 5am-8pm Fri., 10am-4p Sat., 8am-12pm Sun.	Angie Sowle Kenzi Primus	Free child care, basketball courts, outdoor playground, sauna, steam room, y-cycling, lockers, Wi-Fi, free parking, TRX, weight training, cardio training, group fitness, personal training, warm water instructional pool, lap swimming, swim lessons, senior/Silver Sneakers fitness programs, kids' sports leagues for soccer, basketball, softball, tee-ball, sports clinics, before and after school child care, summer camp programs.	2011
1	YMCA of Springfield-Downtown 601 N. Fourth St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-544-9846 springfieldymca.org asowle@springfieldymca.org	200	20,000	5am-9pm Mon.-Thu., 5am-8pm Fri., 7am-4pm Sat., 1-5pm Sun.	Angie Sowle Joey Greenwood	Free child care, basketball courts, racquetball, pickle ball, TRX, sauna, steam room, y-cycling, lockers, Wi-Fi, free parking, weight training, cardio training, group fitness, personal training, martial arts, gymnastics, indoor track, lap swimming, recreational pool, swim lessons, senior/Silver Sneakers fitness programs, kids sports leagues for soccer, basketball, softball, tee-ball, sports clinics, before and after school child care, summer camp programs.	1962
2	FitClub South 3631 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-787-8348 fitclub.net nathan@fitclub.net	100 all locations combined	8,200	24-hour access	Justin Angel, Sherry Carrigan, Carmine Gaulding, Jason Hernandez, Mike Purdy	Free child care, cardiovascular equipment, free weights, lap pools, whirlpool, steam room, sauna, warm water hydro therapy, Capitol Chiropractic Health Center, HSHS Rehabilitation Services, NASM certified personal trainers, nutritional coaching with our registered dietitian, senior exercise programs, group personal training, aquatic classes and group exercise classes, CycleFit, Wi-Fi, locker rental, swim lessons, towel service.	1999
3	FitClub West 2811 W. Lawrence Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-1111 fitclub.net nathan@fitclub.net	100 all locations combined	4,172	24-hour access	Justin Angel, Sherry Carrigan, Carmine Gaulding, Jason Hernandez, Mike Purdy	Free child care, cardiovascular equipment, free weights, NASM certified personal trainers, senior exercise programs, group personal training, aquatic classes, group exercise classes, nutritional coaching with our registered dietitian, lap pools, whirlpool, sauna, CycleFit, Wi-Fi, locker rental, towel service.	1999
4	Springfield Racquet & Fitness Center 3725 Chatham Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-2460 springfieldracquetandfitness.com srfc62704@gmail.com	18	1,800	5:45am-10pm Mon.-Thu., 5:45am-9pm Fri., 7am-7pm Sat., 7am-7pm Sun.	Ross Graham	Indoor sports courts, 6 indoor pickleball courts, 3 pickleball courts in the gym, group and private pickleball lessons, unlimited pickleball membership includes court fees, drop-in pickleball cardio equipment, resistance equipment, free weight areas, professional tennis lessons, clinics/drills by certified instructors - USTA designated, youth tennis excellence training center, adult and junior in-house/travel tennis teams.	2010
5	FitClub North 2701 E. Sangamon Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-788-8250 fitclub.net nathan@fitclub.net	100 all locations combined	1,790	24-hour access	Justin Angel, Sherry Carrigan, Carmine Gaulding, Jason Hernandez, Mike Purdy	Free child care, cardiovascular equipment, free weights, NASM certified personal trainers, senior exercise programs, group personal training, group exercise classes, nutritional coaching with our registered dietitian, Wi-Fi, locker rental and towel service.	1999
6	Bob Freesen YMCA 1000 Sherwood Lane Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-2141 www.jacksonvilleymca.org	50	1,336	5:30am-8pm Mon.-Fri., 7am-3pm Sat.	Drew Comstock, Makala Brown	Gymnasium, outdoor playground, outdoor tennis/pickleball courts, fitness center, baseball fields, soccer/football field, spinning room, racquetball room, free-weight room, six-lane swimming pool with Red Cross-certified lifeguards, lap swim times, water fitness classes, swim team and swim lessons, a registered Master's swim team membership, child watch, after-school care, summer day camps, fitness classes, Pilates machine, senior fitness classes, monthly senior potluck, sauna, Wi-Fi, free parking, Redbird CrossFit facility, 1-mile walking trail with new StoryWalk® for families, Parkinson's class, Rock Steady Boxing.	1968

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PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT: *Sparc*

FitClub acquires members from closure of LA Fitness

Absorbs 1,700 new members across its three locations, plans expansion in Decatur

By Angela Mueller



Nathan Imhoff, CEO of FitClub, said the gym acquired about 1,700 members from the closure of LA Fitness. PHOTO BY ZACH ADAMS

When Springfield's only LA Fitness location abruptly closed last month, locally owned gym FitClub added about 1,700 new members to its books.

FitClub acquired LA Fitness' membership base and equipment when the national fitness chain closed its gym in the White Oaks Mall on July 31. Local LA Fitness memberships transferred to FitClub as of Aug. 1, providing members access to FitClub's three Springfield locations.

"When a club closes, it's always disruptive," said Nathan Imhoff, CEO of FitClub. "But if you can give those members an opportunity for a new home, they appreciate that."

This isn't the first time FitClub has acquired membership from a closing competitor. When the local Charter Fitness franchise shuttered in 2015, FitClub took on its member roster as well.

"We viewed it as a good opportunity to showcase our club to a whole new group of people," Imhoff said of acquiring the membership of closing clubs.

Imhoff acknowledged that not everyone is going to be thrilled about suddenly having their membership transferred to a new gym. He said around 9 percent of Springfield LA Fitness mem-

bers opted not to transfer to FitClub. Prior to the acquisition, FitClub had about 14,000 members. The members acquired as part of the asset deal put the club's total numbers well above 15,600.

"While it is a significant influx, between our locations, we've been able to absorb the new members pretty smoothly," Imhoff said, adding that it helps that August is typically a slower time in the fitness industry.

FitClub, which was founded by Nathan Imhoff's father, Dr. Kevin Imhoff, has locations at 2811 W. Lawrence Ave., 3631 S. Sixth St., and 2710 E. Sangamon Ave. The company is in expansion mode, with plans to open

an InMotion Wellness Studio in Decatur later this year. FitClub's Sixth Street location includes an InMotion stretching studio, which Imhoff describes as fitting between chiropractic and massage therapy.

LA Fitness reached out to FitClub "some time

ago" indicating they were interested in exiting the Springfield market, Imhoff said. He said the Springfield location's isolation from the chain's other gyms, with the next closest LA Fitness being in Chicago, may have contributed to the company's decision to close the gym.

"They didn't have the economies of scale that they are used to," Imhoff said.

LA Fitness is part of California-based Fitness International LLC, which has more than 700 locations across the United States and Canada operating under the LA Fitness, Esporta Fitness, City Sports Club and Club Studio names. LA Fitness did not respond to a request for comment about closing its Springfield location.

Ratings agency S&P Global upgraded its outlook on Fitness International earlier this year, noting that the club was benefitting from the expansion of its boutique Club Studio offering. The ratings agency noted that the company had been consolidating its low-performing LA Fitness clubs during 2025. Overall, S&P noted that there is no sign of a slowdown in the market for high-end and boutique fitness.

"The fitness industry continues to benefit from good demand amid a growing focus on health and wellness among consumers," the ratings report said.

Imhoff said the fitness market in Springfield also continues to be strong.

"I think we have a pretty vibrant market for gyms to operate within," he said. **SBJ**



LA Fitness, located at White Oaks Mall, closed July 31. PHOTO BY ZACH ADAMS

FITNESS CENTERS

Sources: The Fitness Centers. DND - Did Not Disclose.
Ranked by number of members.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE / WEBSITE / EMAIL	# OF EMPLOYEES	# OF MEMBERS	HOURS OF OPERATION	MANAGER(S)	AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT / AMENITIES	YEAR EST'D
7	Anytime Fitness West 4307 Yucan Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-679-2490 anytimefitness.com Facebook: Anytime Fitness West springfieldil2@ anytimefitness.com	5	1,200	24-hour access	Dan Ishmael, owner	Stepmill, rowing machine, fully equipped free weight area including cables and squat racks. Treadmills, ellipticals, bikes with own TV viewing, free weights, TRX bands, selectorized equipment, cable crossover.	2012
8	Powerworks Fitness 347 Williams Lane Chatham, IL 62629	217-697-8727 www.pwfchatham.com pwfchatham@gmail.com	20	1,100	9 am-noon and 3-6pm Mon.-Fri.	Brittany Bisch	Free weights, cardio equipment, locker rooms, group exercise classes including a state of the art cycle studio, HIIT studio, yoga studio, Power Pilates studio, kickboxing, two gyms, TRX and an Athletic Development training center.	2011
9	Rocket Fitness 326 Sattley Rochester, IL 62563	217-498-1175 rocketfitnesscenter.com rocketfitness@yahoo.com	5	1,000	24-hour access	Tracy Rogers	24-hour facility, unlimited classes with membership, basketball court, free weights, cardio, cycling studio, no long-term contracts - pay as you go option, guest passes and class packages available - no membership required, SilverSneakers accepted. Gym Master app allows you to check schedules, book classes easily and manage your membership right from your phone.	2014
10	Snap Fitness 24/7 1061 Jason Place Chatham, IL 62629	217-483-5701 chatham@snapfitness.com https://www.snapfitness.com/us	3	800	24-hour access	Danielle Ladage	Free weights, strength, cardio and functional training. Personal training, young athlete training and nutrition coaching. Heart rate technology. Included with membership is Snapp App, which includes workout programming and virtual classes.	2005
11	Snap Fitness 650 E. Jackson St. Auburn, IL 62615	217-483-4348 https://www.snapfitness.com/us	3	750	24-hour access	Bella Moser	Free weights, strength, cardio and functional training. Personal training, young athlete training and nutrition coaching. Heart rate technology. Included with membership is Snap App which includes workout programming and virtual classes.	2005
12	Snap Fitness 24/7 1362 Toronto Road Springfield, IL 62712	217-679-0081 springfield@snapfitness.com https://www.snapfitness.com/us	3	550	24-hour access	Kevin Ladage	Free weights, strength, cardio and functional training. Personal training, young athlete training and nutrition coaching. Heart rate technology. Included with membership is Snap App which includes workout programming and virtual classes.	2005
13	Snap Fitness 24/7 131 Illini Blvd. Sherman, IL 62684	217-381-4951	3	500	24-hour access	Brittany Clark	Free weights, strength, cardio and functional training. Personal training, young athlete training and nutrition coaching. Heart rate technology. Included with membership is Snap App which includes workout programming and virtual classes.	2005
14	Orangetheory Fitness 2450 W. Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-953-0054 orangetheoryfitness.com Studio0805@orangetheoryfitness.com	8	430	Open 7 days a week	Brittany Turner, Richard England	Full body group workout that blends strength, cardio and coaching to help you burn fat, build muscle and aid in longevity. HYROX training classes and personal training services.	2017

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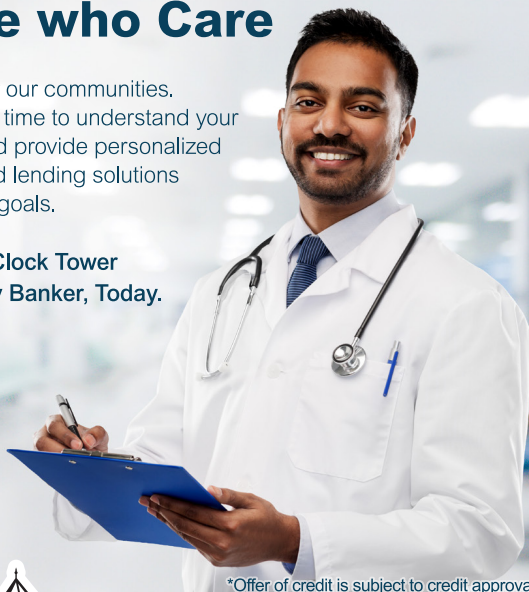
Sources: The Fitness Centers. DND - Did Not Disclose.
Ranked by number of members.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE / WEBSITE / EMAIL	# OF EMPLOYEES	# OF MEMBERS	HOURS OF OPERATION	MANAGER(S)	AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT / AMENITIES	YEAR EST'D
15	Anytime Fitness 2705 N. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62702	217-523-1541 anytimefitness.com	3	430	24-hour access	TBD	Cardio - each piece features its own TV viewing screen, treadmills, ellipticals, crosstrainers, adaptive motion trainers, recumbent bikes, stairclimber, free weights- hammer strength plate loaded, 5-120 lb dumbbells, smith machine, olympic bench, precor/paramount circuit line, modular cable cross over system, private men's and women's shower/bathroom, personal training, rowing machine, squat racks.	2010
16	Achieve Fit 24/7 3041 S. Dirksen Pkwy. Springfield, IL 62703	217-670-2420 achievefit247@outlook.com	1	280	24-hour access	Nic Anderson James Caruso	Cardio equipment with TV screens for your own viewing. Treadmills, ellipticals, crosstrainers, adaptive motion trainers, recumbent bikes, stair-climber, free weights, Hammer Strength plate-loaded machines, 5-120 lb dumbbells, Smith machine Olympic bench, Precor equipment, Paramount circuit line, modular cable cross over system, private men's and women's showers and bathrooms, personal training, rowing machine, squat racks.	
17	Fitbodies 3430 Constitution Drive, Suite 116 Springfield, IL 62711	217-899-4127 See Facebook page fitbodies@yahoo.com	2	194	Classes at 5am, 6am, 7am, 9am, noon, 4:30pm, 5:30pm and 6:30 pm. Mon.-Fri; 9am Sat.	Chris and Kendra Schmulbach	Small group classes. High intensity interval training. Nutritional coaching.	
18	Instinct Fitness and Wellness 301 South Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62704	217-414-8260 InstinctFitnessWellness.com InstinctFitnessWellness@gmail.com	10	120	5am-6:30pm	Tim Hahn Molly Hahn	Barbells, bumper plates, dumbbells, kettlebells, medicine balls, pull-up bars, reverse hyper, GHDs, yoke, rings, Assault Bikes, C2 Rowers, farmers carry bars, logs, plyometric boxes, climbing ropes, jump ropes, sleds, benches, squat racks, bench press station, tires, sledgheammers, treadmill, SkiErg. Front desk bar area, kids' room, main workout floor, secondary workout floor, yoga studio, private office, locker rooms, showers, restrooms, large outdoor spaces, community garden, large parking lot, kitchen, small group classes, longevity 65+ class, yoga, women's weightlifting, women's fitness class, personal training, small group training and team training.	2010
19	Pure Performance Center 320 S. Fourth St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-891-0691 pureperformanceFC@gmail.com	1	100	24-hour access	Jeremy Ferry	Treadmills, ellipticals, recumbent bike, dumbbells, leg extension/leg curl, side lateral machine, calf raise, half rack, 2 0-90 benches, cable crossover with lat pulldown, seated cable row, plate-loaded lat pulldown, adjustable flat decline and incline bench press, leg press machine, functional trainer, assisted chin-up and dip machine, GHD, Concept 2 rower, battle ropes, medicine balls, yoga mats, semi-private personal training and gym membership.	2016
20	Planet Fitness 1756 Wabash Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-4910 planetfitness.com info@planetfitness.com	12	DND	24 hours Mon.-Thu., 12am-10pm Fri., 7am-7pm Sat., 7am-12am Sun	Bonnie Carter	Cardio machines, weight resistance machines, instruction included with membership, tanning, massage beds, total body enhancement.	2013
20	Planet Fitness 1879 E. Sangamon Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-408-4878 planetfitness.com info@planetfitness.com	12	DND	24 hours Mon.-Thu., 12am-10pm Fri., 7am-7pm Sat., 7am-12am Sun	Brad Miller	Cardio machines, weight resistance machines, instruction included with membership, tanning, massage beds, total body enhancement.	2024

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WOMEN'S EVENT CALENDAR

IWIL Symposium Thu., Sept. 17, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

This annual event brings together women leaders at all stages of their careers for a day filled with inspiring presentations, informative breakout sessions, exhibitors and networking. Guest speaker is health and productivity expert Michelle Cederberg. She will focus on how professionals can set worthy goals, revive energy and ignite high performance.

Registration closes Sept. 11.
Info at www.iwil217.org

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Sources: The individual insurance agencies.
Ranked by number of local producers.

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1	TROXELL 214 South Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62704	217-528-7533 troxellins.com info@troxellins.com	41	110	Todd Sowle Jennifer Call John Eck, Jr. Chris Leming Dave White Aaron Jones Corey Kohlrus	Commercial Insurance, Personal Insurance, Employee Benefits, Life/Health, Workers Comp, Bonds, HR Solutions, Financial Services	1887
2	Insurance Partners, Inc. 901 S. Spring St. Springfield, IL 62704	217-544-8644 best-coverage.com info@best-coverage.com	13	4	Doug Ryherd Bryan Ryherd	Home, Auto, Commercial, Life, Health, Worker's Comp, Bonds, Annuities, Senior Products, Business Auto and General Liability	1999
2	Goodenow Insurance Agency, Inc. 719 North Grand Ave. East Springfield, IL 62702	217-523-5443 goodenowinsurance.com goodenow@goodenowinsurance.com	13	10	Donald Goodenow	Home, Auto, Life, Commercial, Health and Medicare health plans	1998
3	Forsyth Insurance Group, Inc. 430 E. Vine St., P.O. Box 2229 Springfield, IL 62705	217-525-9500 217-528-1526 forsyth-ins.com dblankenship@forsyth-ins.com	11	17	Gregory A. Cannedy president	Personal Insurance, Commercial Insurance, Life, Health and Group and Financial Services	1946
4	American Central Insurance Services 3300 Hedley Road Springfield, IL 62711	217-698-9000 americancentralinsurance.com andrew@americancentralins.com	10	20	Jeremy Travelstead Andrew Novaria Dennis Lister Stan Travelstead	Group Health Insurance, Mid-Market 51-500 Group Health Insurance, Em- ployee Benefits, Business Insurance, Medicare, Personal Insurance	1987
5	Dimond Bros. Insurance 3931 Wood Duck Dr. Springfield, IL 62711	217-793-6655 Dimondbros.com Feedback@dimondbros.com	8	11	Mark Donaldson CIO	Commercial Lines, Personal Lines, Employee Benefits, Farm	1867
6	Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. 3200 Pleasant Run, Suite C Springfield, IL 62711	217-546-6900 ajg.com	6	12	Tom Kavanagh	Commercial Insurance and Risk Man- agement, Benefits and HR Consult- ing, TPA Services, Captives, Claims Management, International Solutions, Risk Control Services	1927
6	Bailey Family Insurance 957 Clocktower Dr. Springfield, IL 62704	217-441-2342 baileyfamilyinsurance.com info@baileyfamilyinsurance.com	6	9	Christine and Mark Bailey	Home, Auto, Life, Commercial REI	2017
7	Formea Insurance Group, Inc. 512 S. Church St. Chatham, IL 62629	217-483-1536 www.formeainurance.com tformea@formeainurance.com	4	6	Tracy Formea	Personal Insurance, Commercial Insurance, Bonds and Life Insurance	2003
7	The Group Insurance Agency, LLC 7000 Piper Glen Dr., Suite E Springfield, IL 62711	217-787-7447 thegroupinsuranceagency.com service@thegroupinsuranceagency. com	4	5	Katie Dragoo	Commercial Insurance, Personal Insurance, Life Insurance, Bonds	2008
7	Lee/O'Keefe Insurance Agency, a Dimond Bros. Company 3931 Wood Duck Dr. Springfield, IL 62711	217-528-5679 Leeokeefe.com feedback@dimondbros.com	4	5	Glenda Richards Brian Blough	Business, Personal, Life/Health Insur- ance Bonds	1934
8	Sullivan Insurance & Financial Services Inc. 1209 Main St. Suite B Chatham, IL 62629	217-483-9460 sullivanfinance.com kellys@adviserfocus.com	3	4	Kelly S. Sullivan	Medicare Health Insurance, Employer sponsored Medical, Dental and Vision Insurance plans, 401(k)s.	1991
8	Godfrey Insurance Agency 3261 Meadowbrook Road, Suite 300 Springfield, IL 62711	217-679-5442 godfreyinsuranceagency.com rustin@godfreyinsuranceagency.com	3	4	Rustin Godfrey Lisa Godfrey	Crop Insurance	2002
8	CLP Insurance Solutions 3050 Montvale Drive, Suite C. Springfield IL, 6204	217-535-9500 clpinsurancesolutions.com cplummer@clpinsurancesolutions.com	3	4	Cheri Plummer	Commercial and personal insurance and bonds	2024
9	Preston Insurance Agency, Inc. 3307 Robbins Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-529-9711 prestoninsurance.co prestonins83@yahoo.com	2	2	Bill and Angie Preston	Auto, Home, Life, Business, Health, Medicare Supplements	2000
9	Boehler Insurance Agency, Inc. P.O. Box 9017 Springfield, IL 62791	217-546-5546 boehlerinsurance.com jesse@boehlerinsurance.com	2	2	Jesse Boehler	Personal lines and commercial lines	2022
10	Jumper Insurance 719 North Grand Ave. East Springfield, IL 62702	217-523-5443 cell:217-303-3842 jumperins.com marilyn@goodenowinsurance.com	1	1	Marilyn Jumper	Senior health plans, supplemental and advantage plans. Cancer, heart attack and stroke insurance, dental, recovery care, hospital indemnity, life.	2020
10	Snyder Insurance, a Dimond Bros. Company 3931 Wood Duck Dr. Springfield, IL 62711	217-793-6655 Insurewithsnyder.com feedback@dimondbros.com	1	3	Mark Donaldson, CIO	Personal Insurance: Auto, home, rent- ers and recreational vehicles. Com- mercial Insurance: Business owners policies, workers' compensation and commercial auto. Farm & Agribusi- ness: Specialized coverage for farms and livestock.	

New loan limits challenge medical school students

by Ed Wojcicki

Local medical school and nursing school students are facing new challenges to finance their education due to changes in federal student loan limits.

New borrowing limits, which went into effective July 1, cap a medical school student's federal loan at \$50,000 per year, with an aggregate cap of \$200,000 and a lifetime cap of \$257,000 for undergraduate and medical school combined. That may sound like a lot, but at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield, the estimated price for four years (including tuition, living expenses and other required costs) is \$308,394, according to Dr. Haneme Idrizi, associate dean for student affairs.

The Illinois State Medical Society "considers the new borrowing limits to be a major blow in the effort to build a robust pathway for physician training," said ISMS President Dr. Tripti Kataria, a Chicago anesthesiologist. Those limits "likely cover less than two-thirds the cost of attendance. For some private medical schools, that limit would cover less than half the cost — and that doesn't include non-tuition expenses like room and board."

At SIU, the Class of 2025 averaged \$283,209 in education loans, and 64 percent of the students exceeded the new \$200,000 cap (which did not apply to them) by an average of \$73,949. "These funding gaps will likely require many students to seek private loans, creating more barriers for applicants with limited access to private financing or other resources," Idrizi said. She also said it is a significant possibility that some students who begin medical school might not be able to finish, "particularly for students who are unable to secure private loans or other financial resources to fill the funding gap."

An additional challenge for medical students is the federal elimination as of July 1 of Grad



Seventy-two students graduated from the SIU School of Medicine on May 16. Dr. Jerry Kruse, the retiring SIU dean and provost, fears that new federal changes limiting borrowing for medical school may result in fewer students from low-income and working-class families. PHOTO COURTESY SIU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

PLUS loans, a federal student loan program that was available to graduate students. Idrizi said 80 percent of SIU's Class of 2025 utilized this type of loan, with \$72,027 being the average amount borrowed. "We anticipate that a similar proportion of students may need to rely on private loans to fill the funding gap," she said.

Dr. Jerry Kruse, the retiring SIU dean and provost, said that over time the financial stress caused by these changes "may result in fewer medical students from low-income and working-class families, areas of educational disadvantage, marginalized populations and rural communities."

ISMS' Kataria expressed the same concern: "The burden will likely fall heaviest on under-represented and lower-income groups and individuals who would otherwise be interested in pursuing lower-compensated specialties, such as primary care and pediatrics. Medicine could become a career path accessible only to the affluent."

Effect on nursing schools

The new federal borrowing limits affect only graduate school and professional school students, not undergraduates.

This fall, the University of Illinois Springfield

pre-nursing program, which has a partnership with the University of Illinois Chicago School of Nursing for students seeking a bachelor's degree in nursing, will enroll about 120 undergraduate students, and Lincoln Land Community College's associate degree nursing program will have about 250 students. Loan limits for those students have not changed, but in recent years, representatives from both schools said, more nursing students and more working nurses are looking to pursue advanced degrees for which there are federal loan limits.

"Knowing they might not be able to

afford that (master's or doctoral) professional-level education could deter some students from going into nursing at all," said Sara McPherson, director of the Springfield Campus-UIC nursing program. "This is speculative but possible."

At Lincoln Land, Chief Communications Officer Kyla Kruse said a student can start as a certified nursing assistant, advance to a licensed practical nurse and registered nurse, "and then we've seen our alumni continue their education in healthcare to achieve advanced degrees, such as the Doctor of Nursing Practice."

In the past two years, the ISMS supported three bills in the Illinois General Assembly that would provide state-level grants and other funds for medical students and residents, but none of the legislation passed both chambers.

"ISMS hopes that the federal government reconsiders (its) misguided policy change and restores the availability of federal lending to the next generation of physicians before it is too late," Kataria said. **SBJ**

Ed Wojcicki has a degree in journalism, worked for print publications for 26 years and now freelances from Springfield.

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Retired doctor donates \$1M to HSHS NICU

Hospital to purchase more lifesaving transport equipment for neonatal unit

By Dilpreet Raju

Former HSHS anesthesiologist Dr. Babu Prasad has donated \$1 million to St. John's Children's Hospital to celebrate his 80th birthday.

Dr. Beau Batton, director of newborn services at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital, said the donation will fund upgrades to specialized respiratory and temperature control equipment that's critical for transporting newborns in need of medical care. The neonatal intensive care unit cares for about 800 babies each year, with about 45 newborn inpatients on any given day, Batton said.

"One of the many things we do around here is provide neonatal transport from essentially two hours in every direction. Sometimes those transports are by helicopter and sometimes those transports are by ground," Batton said. "We do about 150 of these transports a year."

Aryn Hunter, chief administrative officer at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital, said the hospital's NICU is a lifeline for young families across much of central Illinois.

"Dr. Prasad's gift will help provide lifesav-



Dr. Babu Prasad speaks to reporters in the lobby of HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital on Aug. 11.

PHOTO BY DILPREET RAJU

ing equipment and technology including an additional temperature-controlled, encased bed specifically crafted for ambulances transporting newborns to the children's hospital from outly-

ing areas," Hunter said.

Some of the donation will also go toward supporting other NICU programs the hospital offers, such as home care. **SBJ**

ing areas," Hunter said.

Prasad retired more than 20 years ago from a career in anesthesiology and previously donated \$1 million to the neonatal intensive care unit in 2020.

"I want to make Springfield one of the best cities to live here in the country," he said. "I am blessed to be here; I am blessed to be a part of St. John's Hospital... we should hope others will come forward and help the community," Prasad said.

Ali Farmer, director of the HSHS St. John's Foundation, praised the former anesthesiologist's journey and generosity.

"Dr. Prasad arrived in the United States from India in 1971 with little more than his medical degree and the hope of building a new life here. He found opportunity here. He built a distinguished career at St. John's Hospital and has chosen to extend the same promise of opportunity to babies beginning their life



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Usher employees safely through times of change and uncertainty

By Kelly Gust

Change is a leadership job: Help people get to the other side

Years ago, I had the opportunity to be part of the change management effort for a large enterprise re-source planning implementation. I wasn't responsible for making software decisions or solving technical challenges — thankfully. Instead, my responsibilities were on the people side: user training, site readiness and communications. Other people were responsible for making sure the system worked. My job was to help make sure people were ready for it.

This project made me realize something I've seen many times since: Organizations don't experience change. People do. No matter how sound the strategy or compelling the business case, change doesn't succeed simply because leaders made a good decision. People must make the journey too. Facing change is like looking across a river you're not sure you can cross, and a leader's job is to help team members get safely to the other side.

Remember: You've had a head start

One mistake I see is that leaders forget how long they've had to process a change. By the time employees hear about a new system, process or strategy, leaders have discussed it for months. They've considered alternatives, worked through concerns and become comfortable with the decision. Then they announce it and wonder why everyone isn't immediately on board.

Your employees' journey doesn't begin until you tell them. Some will be excited. Others will be skeptical or worried. Resistance isn't always an indication that someone is difficult or unwilling to change. Sometimes they're simply trying to understand their new reality. Give people a chance to catch up.

Make sure there's something for everyone

During our ERP implementation, we learned that effective training and communication had to include something for everyone. Some people needed the big picture: Why are we doing this? Others needed practical information: What will I do differently Monday morning? Some needed hands-on training. Others wanted reference ma-



terials they could use later. Even employees who weren't directly using the new system needed to understand how workflows, colleagues or customers might be affected.

That's an important lesson for any change: Don't design communication around what leadership wants to say. Design it around what different groups need to know, understand and do.

Use readiness conversations to head off resistance

Readiness conversations ahead of the launch helped us understand key questions: What are people hearing? What are they worried about? What don't they understand? Where are managers struggling to answer questions? What resources aren't ready?

Having these conversations early gives leaders an opportunity to address concerns early. It also helps us recognize that perceived resistance contains valuable information. The employee questioning a new process likely sees a problem you've missed. The manager saying her team isn't ready may have identified a training gap. The person asking the same question on repeat is a sign your communication isn't as clear as you think.

Instead of trying to eliminate resistance, get curious about it. You'll better understand where the change needs reinforcement.

Communicate, even when you don't have every answer

Uncertainty creates a vacuum, and people will fill

it. You won't always have all the answers, and that's ok. Tell people what you know and what you don't. Be clear about what has been decided, what hasn't and when they can expect more information.

And communicate more than once. In my experience, leaders often become tired of repeating a message at the time employees are finally beginning to absorb it.

Pay attention to what people are leaving behind

Leaders tend to focus on what an organization will gain from change: efficiency, growth, better

technology or stronger processes. But employees often think about what they'll lose: familiar routines, expertise, relationships, confidence and the comfort of knowing exactly how to do their job. Acknowledging these losses doesn't mean avoiding change; it means recognizing the human experience of it.

Build the bridge

Our ERP implementation also taught me that "go live" wasn't the finish line. Technology can function as designed, but if people aren't prepared to use it, don't understand what is expected or don't know where to turn for help, then you're not finished.

That's true of almost every organizational change. Leaders can't eliminate uncertainty or make change painless. But we can build the bridge between what people know today and what we're asking them to embrace tomorrow.

We can explain why we're crossing. Provide the training and resources people will need when they arrive. Listen when someone points out that part of the bridge looks shaky. Slow down when necessary, and adjust the route when new information tells us we should.

A leader's job isn't simply to announce the destination. It's to help people get there safely.



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

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SPRINGFIELD AREA

BASED UPON A SURVEY OF THEIR PEERS



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"DOGtors on Call" at Memorial Hospital

Springfield Memorial Hospital has expanded its animal-assisted therapy program with four newly certified therapy dogs, thanks to a \$4,500 grant from the Springfield Memorial Foundation. The program, called "DOGtors on Call," pairs hospital staff members who volunteer their time and their dogs to interact with patients.

"We were delighted to help fund the DOGtors on Call program," said Pam Hulten, director of the Springfield Memorial Foundation. "The joy it brings to our patients and colleagues is priceless."

The program expansion builds on the work of Kylo, a 6-year-old German shepherd who has visited patients weekly alongside his handler, Michelle Geiss, a psychiatric nurse practitioner. Positive patient response to Kylo's visits prompted nursing leadership to pursue broader programming.

"Patients adore Kylo," Geiss said. "They love to hang out with him in the activity room, play fetch with him and give him belly rubs. He brightens their mood and provides comfort and companionship."



PHOTO BY ZACH ADAMS

The four new DOGtors include:

- Bandit:** an 8-year-old Corgi handled by Maureen Brusnighan, a member of the environmental services team. Brusnighan rescued Bandit from a Missouri breeder. Bandit passed his certification exam first among the four dogs.
- Huck:** a 3-year-old golden retriever handled by registered nurse Ashley Ferris. Ferris adopted Huck after seeing him available on social media. Her previous dog, Willow, was also a certified therapy dog.
- Lucy:** a 2-year-old goldendoodle handled by Christine Waldhauser, SMH director of nursing. Waldhauser and her husband spent 14 weeks training with Lucy before certification.
- Stirling:** a 9-year-old red and white tri-colored Australian shepherd handled by Craig Frank, a mental health technician who has worked at SMH for 43 years. Frank said Stirling helps patients open up and provides a calming presence in high-stress areas.

The foundation grant covered Alliance of Therapy Dogs membership fees, background checks and handler uniforms. All dogs and handlers completed months of training and earned certification through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs before beginning patient visits.



PHOTO BY ZACH ADAMS

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Who owns your medical records?

by Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.

This is a question that sounds simple but has quite a complicated answer that raises a whole host of questions. Who is responsible for maintaining the records? How long do they need to be retained? Who owns the records? And, perhaps most importantly, who has access to them?

Illinois law draws an important distinction between ownership of medical records and the right to access the information contained within those records. Understanding that distinction can help patients, providers and families avoid confusion. The issue arises more often than many people realize. People change physicians and want copies of years of treatment records. Children seek records for aging parents. Attorneys request records in connection with litigation.

The short answer is that medical records are not treated like a car title, a bank account or a deed to real estate. Generally speaking, healthcare providers own the records they create and maintain. However, patients possess strong rights to inspect and obtain copies of information contained within those records. Federal law — most notably the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, commonly known as HIPAA — grants patients important access rights. Illinois law provides similar protections.

For most patients, the practical result is that ownership matters far less than access. Years ago, requests for medical records often involved a trip to a physician's office and a wait while office staff photocopied portions of a chart. Not surprisingly, it's a different world these days given that electronic health records have transformed the way information is stored, shared and accessed. (Certainly, you've noticed your doctor no longer takes notes but rather enters info into the computer.) Patients now expect to view laboratory results, reports, medication lists, appointment histories, medical histories and physician notes through online patient portals.

Doctors, on the other hand, remain responsible for protecting confidential medical information and ensuring records are released only to those legally entitled to receive them. The provider who releases records to the wrong person can face ramifications that range from regulatory consequences to civil liability.



A common situation involves family relationships. Many spouses assume they are automatically entitled to obtain the other's medical records. Parents often assume they can access records for adult children. And children frequently seek records for elderly parents whose health is declining.

But it's not the familial relationship that matters; it's whether there is authority. Powers of attorney for healthcare, statutes regarding parental rights, guardianship orders, written authorizations and similar documents generally determine who has access. While it may not be hard to determine if someone is acting in good faith, the real challenge is confirming the requester possesses the necessary legal authority. This is just one reason the well-advised reader and their loved ones should have powers of attorney.

Another challenge involves record retention. Most people assume doctors' records must be kept forever. Federal and state requirements, however, govern how long certain records must be maintained. Different rules may apply depending on the type of provider, the nature of the treatment and the age of the patient. As such, patients are sometimes surprised to discover that records from treatment received decades earlier may no longer exist.

The issue becomes even more complicated when physicians retire, relocate, merge practices or sell their practice. Central Illinois has seen substantial healthcare consolidation since I moved to town in 1999. Independent physician practices increasingly have become affiliated with larger healthcare systems. Those transactions often involve the transfer, management and storage of vast quantities of medical records.

When handled properly, patients may never notice the transition. When handled poorly, confusion can arise regarding where records are located and how they may be obtained. The lesson for patients is that it's best to be proactive now.

Not surprisingly, cybersecurity has emerged as one of the most significant issues facing healthcare providers today. Historically, the main concern was unauthorized access to filing cabinets and paper charts. Today, doctors maintain huge quantities of electronic health information. Medical records contain some of our most sensitive data — social security numbers, insurance information, dates of

birth, financial information and detailed health histories. For hackers, that information has real world value.

For that reason, ransomware attacks and data breaches have become major concerns throughout the healthcare industry. Such an event happened to one major local healthcare entity a few years ago and ended in litigation. Breaches involving medical records can trigger notification obligations, regulatory investigations, reputational harm and litigation. Within the healthcare industry, safeguarding patient information has become as important as maintaining the records themselves.

What does all this mean for you? First, understand your rights and maintain copies of important medical information, both for yourself and for those you love. Second, families should ensure that powers of attorney and other authorization documents are in place before an emergency arises. Third, remember that medical records are far more than information stored on a computer server. They are often essential to ongoing treatment, insurance claims, legal matters and critical healthcare decisions. Understanding who can access those records and under what circumstances can spare considerable frustration when it matters most.



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

Wooden It Be Lovely expands

Moves to Temple Israel building to offer support services for more women

By Janet Seitz

After 10 years of operating from Douglas Avenue United Methodist Church, Wooden It Be Lovely, a nonprofit that assists women transitioning out of difficult life experiences, has moved to its new location at 1140 W. Governor St. in the building previously occupied by Temple Israel. Women participating in WIBL's program are taught how to refurbish donated wood furniture, sew and make candles to sell in the organization's boutique.

The organization is the creation of former cancer and hospice nurse Margaret Ann Jessup, who felt a calling to help people at pivotal times in their lives. She attended seminary and interned at Thistle Farms in Nashville, Tenn., an organization that supports women survivors of exploitation. It was there that her heart was moved by these women who had experienced addiction, abuse and prostitution. While still in seminary, Jessup served at Douglas Avenue United Methodist Church and founded Wooden It Be Lovely in 2016. The organization became a nonprofit in 2021.

"Our mission is to provide hope, transitional employment, housing and love to women recovering from lives of poverty, addiction and abuse" said Jessup, who is executive director of WIBL. "I often tell people that we support and love women until they love themselves. ... I believe that we really do change the trajectory of women's lives, and many will state that we save their lives."

WIBL changed its own trajectory thanks to a \$250,000 gift from the Justice Benjamin K. Miller Charitable Fund, which enabled the organization to move to its new, larger location and expand its services. "Owning your own building certainly comes with many additional expenses," Jessup said. "We have been saving for this day but know the future will require us to work harder to raise



The Rev. Margaret Ann Jessup is the executive director of Wooden It Be Lovely, a nonprofit founded by Douglas Avenue United Methodist Church in 2016. The organization became a separate nonprofit in 2021 and has now purchased the former Temple Israel building across the street for a significant expansion PHOTO BY ZACH ADAMS

funds by donations, grants and increased sales. God has always provided a way."

The move comes with great appreciation for the years of rent-free space and support provided by the Douglas Avenue United Methodist Church. "Many people have supported our work along the way," Jessup said. "Our volunteers, the congregation at Douglas Avenue and our board. We have always had such an amazing board of directors. They don't always get the gratitude they deserve."

"If I were to name one person, it would be Julia Melgreen. She was the pastor of the church when we started. She gave me the greenlight to start something that many believed impossible. She believed, and I'll never forget that."

Jessup said she has had numerous memorable experiences, many of which have to do with personal stories of the women. But her most recent memorable moment was on July 1. "We all walked into our new building, turned the lights on, and we all just felt an enormous sense of pride," she said. "We had our own space where the women we serve could grow and thrive and in a building that is beautiful and that we will create as a beautiful safe haven."

Jessup said she is proud that WIBL has continued in its work of supporting women for 10 years now. "And 81% of our graduates remain sober and employed in their chosen careers," she

said. Last year, 100% of women involved in WIBL attended financial management and health mentoring classes, while some enrolled in college classes for the first time, completed trade certification programs, obtained a driver's license, got a job in the community, purchased a car or reunited with their children.

In addition to WIBL's work program, a residential program that started in 2022 provides women who do not have children or do not have custody of their children with free shelter for

two years or more. During that time, WIBL saves 70% of their income for them, so they have funds when they leave the program. Interested women may apply for these opportunities through the website.

Jessup said lives have changed through WIBL. "I could name many. The first person that always comes to my mind is my colleague and friend, Megan. She came here 10 years ago after 14 years of addiction and a new mom. She was tender, scared and had little confidence or pride in herself. She has grown into a leader. She is now my right hand, a mentor to others and in many ways the artistic hand that makes what we do beautiful. I will always look up to her and call her my friend."

The greatest challenge, Jessup said, is having the funds to do the work they do. And the greatest reward? "Without doubt, seeing women grow, thrive and begin to love themselves," she said.

WIBL is offering tours of the new space Sept. 25-26. For more information, visit woodenitbelovely.love. 

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



PHOTOS BY ZACH ADAMS

By Thomas C. Pavlik

Restaurants come and go, but some spaces seem destined to remain restaurants forever, like the space occupied since early 2024 by Clocktower Café at 751 S. Durkin Drive in Springfield. To the best of my memory, it previously housed several restaurants including Nico's Homestyle and, more recently, Brunchfield Café.

Clocktower Café is advertised as an "American-based café" that is "not just a place to eat; it's a space where the community comes together to savor mouthwatering dishes and create lasting memories." Although I'm not so sure about the memories part, it's largely succeeded in all other aspects.

The first thing returning patrons will notice is that the interior remains familiar. The dining room retains many of the features from the prior incarnation, including comfortable booth seat-

ing, attractive wall décor and a layout that strikes a nice balance between openness and privacy. The space feels bright and welcoming, aided by ample lighting and large windows that help bring the outside in. It's clearly well-maintained, and the overall impression is warm, almost homey, comfortable and inviting, which is exactly what a neighborhood diner should be.

My guest and I arrived shortly before noon and found a steady lunch crowd already in place. Fellow diners appeared to be mostly out on social outings or taking a break from outdoor work. The staff moved efficiently, and service was friendly and attentive from start to finish.

The menu is, to put it simply, enormous. While it focuses heavily on breakfast, Clocktower Café also devotes considerable attention to lunch and dinner offerings. Burgers, sandwiches,

wraps, melts, salads, horseshoes and comfort-food classics fill page after page. In an era when many restaurants continue shrinking menus, Clocktower Café has embraced the opposite direction. I'm generally wary of such large menus under the theory that it's impossible to do that many things well. Clocktower Café bucks that general rule.

Several items caught our attention – the gyro sandwich, the liver and onions (off-putting to me, but loved by many) and the "hungry man" chopped steak. Salad options ranged from traditional chef-style to the Greek salad. Wrap lovers have several choices as well, including turkey, fajita, corned beef, chicken and buffalo-style offerings. Breakfast appeared to be available all day and included the usual offerings and a large variety of "skillets" and crepes. For the older crowd



The turkey club sandwich uses thick slices of meat carved in-house, combined with crisp bacon and fresh vegetables. Entrees are served with a cup of chicken and rice soup. PHOTOS BY ZACH ADAMS

(who probably like liver and onions), there's a separate senior section of the menu.

Both our meals began with cups of chicken and rice soup (included in the price of our entrees). The soup delivered exactly what one hopes for in a lunch outing – a hearty broth, tender chicken and a satisfying amount of rice. If I were being picky, it may have been a bit too salty for my taste, but the flavor was still quite good, and my cup was quickly emptied.

I decided on the turkey club sandwich. I've written before that a club sandwich serves as a litmus test for diners. It is a simple menu item but one that immediately reveals the quality of ingredients and a kitchen's attention to detail. Clocktower Cafe's version passed with flying colors. What immediately distinguished it from many competitors was the turkey. Rather than relying on paper-thin deli slices, Clocktower Cafe uses thicker cuts that appear to be carved in-house from a roasted breast. This

allows the meat to retain moisture and heft, giving the sandwich a more substantial feel and allowing its flavor to take center stage. Combined with crisp bacon, fresh vegetables and toasted bread, the result was a club sandwich that man-

aged to be familiar while still standing apart from the crowd.

The accompanying fries initially caused me some concern; they were lightly breaded, which I generally try to avoid. Fortunately, they were very well executed; they arrived hot, properly seasoned and fried to the point where the exterior remained crisp without becoming greasy. Again, they aren't my preference, but with that limitation they hit the spot.

My guest selected the cheeseburger with American cheese. It was reported as straightforward and satisfying, featuring a properly cooked beef patty, melted American cheese and the classic toppings one expects at a diner. Her only real complaint was that the bun was barely toasted; while opinions vary, we both like the texture provided by a grilled or toasted non-artisan bun.

Portions were generous, prices were reasonable, and service remained consistently attentive; it's a combination that has sustained successful diners for generations. Well done.

Clocktower Cafe isn't a fancy restaurant, nor is its food. But it's fresh, made with quality ingredients at reasonable prices and with generous portions. Couple it with some good service, and we hope it has staying power.

Address: 751 S. Durkin Drive, Springfield
Phone: 217-679-7251
Website: clocktowercafe.net
Hours: Monday-Sunday, 7 a.m.-3 p.m.



The cheeseburger is satisfying, served with classic toppings and lightly breaded fries. PHOTOS BY ZACH ADAMS

New businesses

Sangamon County new business registrations, July 16 – August 15, 2026

New businesses July 16, 2026 – Aug. 15, 2026

ClearPath Professional Services, 1760 Wabash Ave., Unit 9212. 940-290-0238.

George D. Autman.

Motion Dolls, 501 W. Elliott Ave. 217-848-3688. Angela Penton.

Dirty Birdie LLC, 3324 Branchwood Drive. 217-899-1237. Claire Murphy.

PSC Digital, 2712 Old Rochester Road, rear. 317-227-9849. Vincent Alan Roemer.

Everlasting Spa, 509 Dawson St. 217-953-5095. Yanqiu Wu.

Ms. Bell's Sunshine Sweet Ice Tea, 7 Boulder Point Drive. 217-341-7656. Taneli Inc.

Chuck's 3d Printing Lab, 3201 Butler St. 217-502-2511. Charles Kaufman.

The Shining Cleaning Company, 3305 Mackinaw Lane. 217-691-3612. Cathy Ross.

Rick Pennington Lawn Care, 17 Timbercrest Drive. 217-638-2564. Lori I. Pennington.

Dollhouse Nails By Misti, 2540 Yale Blvd. 217-622-3942. Misti Shereda.

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