



Brad Schaive of Laborers Local 477, all suited up and ready for battle. PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE

Labor union manager Brad Schaive is not your average weekend warrior

By Roberta Codemo

“We all have some perception of ourselves,” said Brad Schaive, business manager for Laborers Local 477. “This sport will test you and show you if you are who you think you are. It will test your inner constitution. You have to be prepared mentally and physically.”

He was tested. “I received punishment I never thought I would have volunteered for,” said Schaive. “This is fighting at a level of competition people don’t see every day.”

The sport is full contact armored fighting with live steel. Schaive was part of the original group of 30 fighters who represented the United States in its debut at the Battle of the Nations in Warsaw, Poland, in 2012. “We got beat up pretty good,” he said. “We earned a lot of respect. We went and fought the best in the world.” The team won the award for Best

Debut Team that year.

Twenty-one men wearing the United States colors walk out and you look across the list and see 21 men wearing their nations’ colors carrying two-handed axes, swords, pole axes. “You realize this is not high school football,” said Schaive.

“We surprised a lot of people at how good of a job we did,” continued Schaive. “It takes a lot to compete at that high of a level.”

In his position as business manager, Schaive spends his days fighting for the rights of working men and women. “It can be a stressful way to feed your family,” he said. “An extreme sport like full contact medieval combat is a good outlet for releasing those stresses.”

It started with a phone call from Andre

Sinou, the team captain. Sinou was putting a group together and asked him to help. Schaive called friends he knew in the Society for Creative Anachronism and local fighters. The team held a national tournament in Springfield in preparation. “For some, it was their first time getting hit with steel,” he said. “It was a large learning curve.”

When the fighters returned from Warsaw, he, Sinou and Jaye Brooks started the Armored Combat League. The USA Knights are part of the ACL and represent the United States in international competitions. Schaive compared being part of the ACL to being part of the local union. “It’s very close-knit with deep family ties,” he said.

Each country puts forward three five-

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COMING IN APRIL ... TWO SPECIAL SECTIONS

Education

The April issue will feature news and information about educational institutions and opportunities in Springfield.

The lists:

- Colleges and universities
- Independent private schools

Fairways & greens

The April issue will also feature a special section on golf and related industries in central Illinois.

The lists:

- Public golf courses
- Local golf outings

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Joe Michelich in front of South County's Auburn office. PHOTO COURTESY OF SOUTH COUNTY PUBLICATIONS.

South County's small town empire

By Roberta Codemo

When Joe Michelich was 15 years old, he was diagnosed with an enlarged heart and couldn't participate in sports. He decided to write for his high school newspaper and later majored in journalism in college. Today the now 84-year-old Michelich runs South County Publications, a family-owned business based in Auburn.

"I own every weekly newspaper in Sangamon County but Illiopolis," said Michelich, who was born in Auburn and lived briefly in Michigan before moving back with his family in 1959. The move came at the urging of John Michelich, a first cousin who ran a DeSoto Plymouth dealership and came to Detroit every year with his wife, Helen, for the new car show.

"We've been fortunate. When a community loses its newspaper, it loses its identity. People lose their main source of news."

"John asked me what I was going to do with a journalism degree," said Michelich. "I told him I didn't know and hadn't given it a hell of a lot of thought. He told me Ted Dunn had his newspaper for sale and said 'Why don't you buy it?'" He and his family were in transit to Auburn when he decided to take his cousin's advice and buy the paper. "I didn't know what I was getting into," he said. "When we got here, people who knew my parents would ask me why we left Detroit," continued Michelich. "I enjoy it here. Little towns have distinct qualities."

He purchased the *Auburn Citizen* and *Divernon News* for \$22,000 and became a

newspaperman on June 1, 1959. He is the sixth publisher of the *Auburn Citizen*, which was founded in 1874. "I made \$2,500 the first year I was in business," said Michelich.

"I've been my own boss most of my life," he added. "I don't know if I could work for someone. Running your own business is tough. If you can't pay the bills, it comes out of your pockets."

He enjoys it. "There are some days I get ticked off," he admitted. "At the end of the day, I put out a decent newspaper."

In 1963, he bought the *Chatham Clarion*. "I was 29 years old," said Michelich. He added the *Pawnee Post*, *Rochester Times*, *Pleasant Plains Press*, *New Berlin Bee*, *Riverton Register*, *Tri-City Register* and *Williamsville-Sherman Sun Times* to his growing newspaper empire over the next few years.

There are approximately 600 newspapers published in Illinois, of which approximately 500 are weeklies. The Illinois Press Association defines a weekly as a paper that is published three or fewer times per week.

Small town newspapers report about events important in their specific communities and residents who do not read the newspaper have no other way to get this information. "Schools and sports are our big things," said Michelich. "We do a good job covering sports at all the schools. Sports bring a community together."

There are days when it gets stressful. He would rather run a 50th anniversary story on the front page than a drug bust. He doesn't like sensationalism. There have been times he has had to make hard decisions based on the situation. "You make the decision and you live through it," said Michelich. "Nobody's shot me yet."

Michelich said the newspaper is doing okay. "We've been here 100-some years and we're not going anywhere," he said. "It's an important part of the town."

Dennis DeRossett, executive director of the Illinois Press Association, said in many ways the newspaper is the lifeblood of the community. A survey conducted by the National Newspaper Association showed that 78 percent of the respondents read a community newspaper for local news and information. "It's a niche," he said.

Continued on page 4

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Joe Michelich's office in Auburn. He still does all his work on this manual typewriter

Continued from page 3

"I've been very fortunate," said Michelich. The last time he raised his advertising rates was in 2005, which was about the same time he raised the subscription rates. The newspaper had its worst year last year and its best year the year before.

He doesn't have a large advertising base to draw on. "The economy has a bearing on it," said Michelich. "Small businesses don't have to advertise a lot."

"Advertisers go where the readers are," said DeRossett. There has been a change in the way businesses do business. Advertising has been diluted across a number of platforms.

Newspapers receive 75 percent of their revenue through advertising. If the economic health of a community is strong, business is strong. If there is a downturn in the economy, local businesses don't do well and this has a direct impact on the local newspaper because businesses advertise less.

"We've been around a long time," said Michelich. "We've been fortunate. When a community loses its newspaper, it loses its identity. People lose their main source of news."

He employs 29 full- and part-time employees. "I have a loyal staff," said Michelich, some of whom have been with him 20 to 40 years. "They're a blessing. It makes it easy to come to work."

There has been a lot of talk about the demise of the newspaper industry. "A newspaper is really an information-gathering company that provides news when people want it and how they want it," said DeRossett. Newspapers provide news

through web and mobile platforms. News is constantly being updated so readers don't have to wait for the next edition.

DeRossett said Warren Buffet has been investing heavily in the newspaper industry. He has been a major buyer for the past two years. "He has a lot of integrity," he said. "He doesn't make foolish investments."

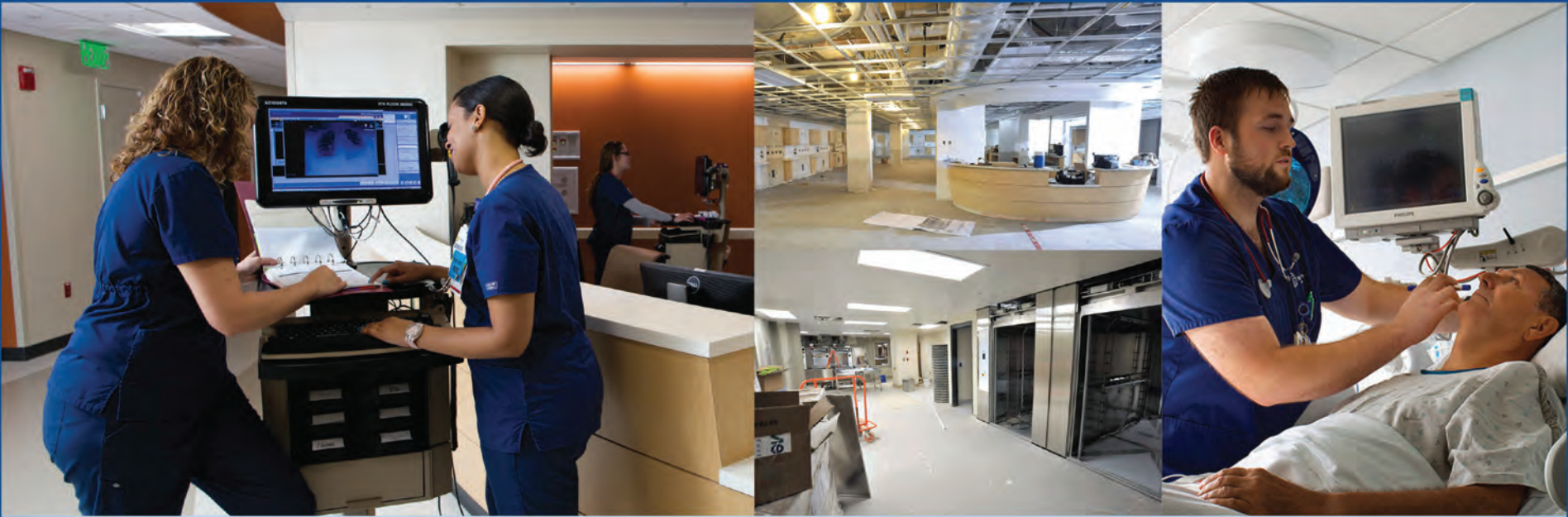
A statewide survey conducted several years ago showed 40 percent of the respondents between the ages of 18 and 34 had read a local newspaper within the past week and 67 to 68 percent of all respondents had read a local newspaper within the past week. In Illinois, 67.3 percent of respondents had read a local newspaper within the past week and 73.6 percent had read an Illinois newspaper.

The pass-along rate – the number of people who read and pass along a copy of the newspaper – is increasing. In 2013, the pass-along rate was 2.48 percent compared to 2.18 percent in 2012. This is a good indicator that newspapers are not going anywhere.

Michelich plans to hand the newspaper down to his son, Joe M. Michelich, who serves as publisher. "He's my right hand man," he said.

"I'm going to keep going as long as I can," said Michelich. "When the good man wants me, he can have me." □

Roberta Codemo is a full-time freelance writer and started Codemo Writing Services in 2012. She works with small business owners to help create compelling online content and build their web presence. She can be reached at rcodemo@hotmail.com.



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Schaive prepares to meet all comers

PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE

Weekend warrior

Continued from page 1

man teams, three singles fighters and one 16 on 16 team. Last year a 50-man team traveled to Aigues-Mortes in southern France and competed against 23 teams. The premier five-on-five Striking Eagles team took fourth in the world. “It was phenomenal,” said Schaive, who is part of the team.

“I’ve always been fond of medieval history,” said Schaive. He loves reading stories about the Black Prince and Henry V. “I’ve always been drawn to armor.” He became involved in the SCA because he wanted to compete in armor.

The sport changes you. “It’s a singular journey,” said Schaive, who is training at a level he hasn’t trained at since his Army days and has lost 33 pounds. He does Crossfit three to four days a week, massive amounts of cardio, physical training in full armor and flat out fighting. His steel of choice is a two-handed pole ax – a 6 ½-foot-long wooden pole topped with a 7-pound steel ax.

It’s a violent sport. Medieval combat was not gentle. Schaive compares it to Greco Roman wrestling, mixed martial arts, boxing and a street fight combined into one. Participants are big, strong and fast with salty dispositions and a tendency towards violence. “You have to be comfortable with violence,” he said.

When asked about his reputation as an aggressive negotiator, Schaive said he had been called worse. “It’s a lot like fighting in our sport,” he said. “You give it everything you have and go to the extreme. Sometimes you get knocked down but as long as you keep standing up you’ll win in the end.”

The International Medieval Combat Federation replaced the Battle of the Nations and this year the international competition will be held in Belmonte, Spain. This will be the first year women will be allowed to fight in international competition. “Women want to get tested,” said Schaive.

He sees the national team as ambassadors when they travel to international competitions. “Some countries have no contact with Americans or have strong beliefs about the United States and Americans,” said Schaive.

The national team is held to a high standard and team members must uphold the ideals of a knight. “Crowds expect to see knights,” said Schaive. “You have to act like a knight, look like a knight and fight like a knight.” Everything from weapons to armor must be documented and historical. “If it doesn’t look like it came out of a museum or a manuscript or an effigy, you can’t compete,” he said.

The Spring Nationals tournament will be March 29 at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Livestock Center from noon to 3 p.m. Admission is \$10 per person or \$25 per family. The 50-member United States team will be announced.

Schaive encourages people to come out. He’s had an outpouring of moral support from his union members. He said his union family has been nothing but supportive.

“The sport is growing exponentially,” said Schaive. “We have new fighters signing up every day. We’re still looking for local men and women.” □

Roberta Codemo can be reached at rcodemo@hotmail.com.

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DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT



Kent Massie, Victoria Ringer, John Stremsterfer and Paul O'Shea

PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE

Historic Preservation at Dobbs Building

By Ginny Lee

Before Karen and Court Conn bought the Dobbs Building at 625 E. Monroe in Springfield, it had been offices for DCFS and First Federal Bank, among other enterprises. The Conns acquired the property recently and presented it at a meeting of the Historic Preservation Fund of the Community Foundation of the Land of Lincoln Feb. 5.

Plans are to rehab the interior for retail on the first floor and housing on the upper level. The building is one of nine vacant downtown buildings the SDAT (Sustainable Design Assessment Team) pinpointed as potential housing, according to Paul O'Shea of the Historic Preservation Fund.

The Fund is part of the Community Foundation, headed by John Stremsterfer. "Five years ago at the rededication of the Old State Capitol, we had \$300 or \$400 in the Fund," member Bob Gray said. "Paul O'Shea suggested we create a preservation fund, and it has grown to more than \$40,000."

Last year the Preservation Fund awarded a \$1,000 grant to Downtown Springfield Inc. for its new Springfield Historic Cultural Trail app for smart phones. "DSI could not be more honored with this grant," DSI director Victoria Ringer said as she showed off the new app on her phone.

The app currently designates 11 sites, including the Dana Thomas House, the Vachel Lindsay Home and the Elijah Iles House, as well as Lincoln sites. It was designed by King Technology, located

downtown at 3 N. Old Capitol Plaza.

The next HPF grant will be for a conceptual plan to convert Jackson Street between Second and Eighth Streets into a pedestrian boulevard. Members of the Preservation Fund discussed the proposed Pedestrian Corridor, from Lincoln's Home west to the State Capitol building. Bob Gray suggested the corridor 15 years ago, according to Ringer, and the 2002 RUDAT (Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team) study had advocated the corridor to enhance tourist foot traffic.

"There is no safe way to cross Seventh Street at Jackson," Paul O'Shea said. "Or Sixth, Fifth and Fourth Streets." The challenge is how to do it without disrupting traffic, he added.

"Decatur did it on Merchant Street downtown," landscape architect Kent Massie said. "The Third Street crossing could be a hub, part of the downtown and Capitol complex." The block encompassing the former YWCA building is crucial to such a plan, Massie said, as is a watershed management plan. The city's Sanitary and Storm sewer was built in the 1860s.

Other suggestions for the Jackson Street corridor were a wine garden, a concert venue and using stone saved from the old Carnegie Library.

The HPF board of directors includes Paul O'Shea, Justin Blandford, Karen Conn, Fletcher Farrar, Bruce Ferry, Bob Gray and Carolyn Oxtoby. □



Dobbs Building, 625 E. Monroe

The Conn family held a ribbon cutting Friday, Jan. 31, at its newest business venture, Wm. Van's Coffee House, at the southwest corner of S. Seventh St. and Jackson Street.

In November of 2008 the Conns had the Lincoln-era Maisenbacher House moved five blocks north on Seventh St. to its current location. Expert House Movers of Defiance, Mo., completed the job during a cold weekend.

Since then, Court, Karen and Casey Conn have shored up the house and restored the interior, transforming it into a stylish coffee shop and meeting place. Wm. Van's is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily and offers many coffee possibilities and breakfast items all day, as well as sandwiches, salads and soups. □



Above: Wm. Van's promises to be a popular spot for tourists to the Lincoln Home and for locals. The name of the shop is a tribute to Court Conn's grandfather, William Van Lewis.

Left: Oversize photos of the 2008 house move, made by Karen Conn's father, Jack Stevens, adorn the walls of two of the rooms at William Van's. A large communal table is the centerpiece of the main room, and newspapers and magazines are available for browsing.



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DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT



Karen Conn, incoming DSI president

PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE

Downtown Rocks at annual DSI dinner

By Ginny Lee

"Downtown Rocks!" was the theme of Downtown Springfield Inc's annual dinner & award event Thursday, Jan. 22, at the Springfield Hilton. Nearly 500 people attended.

Scott Troehler, president of DSI for the past two years, stepped down from his position, as Karen Conn became incoming president of DSI. Introduced as a woman with "enthusiasm, energy and tenacity," Conn promised to help make Downtown Springfield rock in 2014-15.

Director Victoria Ringer listed various DSI accomplishments, such as raising and spending \$330,000 in advertising during the past nine years.

"The moxie and unique qualities of downtown business owners and employees is what makes downtown so special," Ringer said. She noted the 2012 SDAT (Sustainable Design Assessment Team) study, which advocated more downtown housing, and the Artification mural project, which will continue into 2015.

Ringer recognized that state government is leaving downtown and may not be coming back. "We have nine shovel-ready projects," Ringer said. "People want to live downtown, and we want to help that happen."

Various longtime downtown Springfield businesses were recognized by DSI, among them law firm Brown, Hay & Stephens, which has been in business for 185 years, and Maldaner's restaurant, a downtown fixture for 130 years.

In his annual State of the Downtown address Mayor Mike Houston called Springfield's downtown emergent, vigorous, vicarious and full of promise. "Our downtown is poised to explode with tourism and business growth," Houston said.

The mayor noted the "History to Hollywood" exhibit at Union Station, the Springfield Green program and improvements to the Ferguson building and other downtown properties. Another accomplishment is the \$14.4 million United States Department of Transportation grant approved for underpasses when higher speed rail traffic begins, he said.

"The Prairie Capital Convention Center is putting the finishing touches on its \$15 million renovations to make it more user-friendly and functional for everyone," Houston said. He also cited \$880,000 in TIF funds for the proposed Kidzeum on E. Adams St. For more of Mayor Houston's speech, see p. 37 of this issue.



Best New Event: Springfield Art Association — Paint the Street Fest

Other TIF grants are \$5 million to the Prairie Capital Convention Center, \$1.7 million for restoration of the Booth and Ferguson buildings at Sixth and Monroe streets, and \$860,000 for renovation of the former Motor Inn and adjoining buildings at Fourth and Monroe streets.

"We need an environment that is safe and sparkling," Houston said. "Our police department needs to be a presence downtown."

Individuals can join DSI for \$30 a year. The organization sponsors the downtown Farmers Market and numerous festivals, including Taste of Downtown in July and the Blues & Barbeques event in August. Some 250 volunteers staff DSI events. Call 217-544-1723 to join or volunteer.

The SDAT study is online at sdatspringfield.com. □



DSI PRESENTED 17 AWARDS AT THE EVENT:

Upper Story Renovation: Noll Law Offices — the Noll Family
Outstanding Façade Renovation: Sugar Jar Bakery — Sabrina Martindale
Outstanding Interior Renovation: Rustic Originals — Chris Nickell
Overall Renovation: Prairie Capitol Convention Center
Public/Private Partnership: IHPA and SJR — First Citizen Award Ceremony
Best New Event: Springfield Art Association — Paint the Street Fest
Long-term Event: Springfield Arts Council — First Night Springfield
Green Advocate: Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Best New Business Retail: Urban Sassafras
Best New Business Restaurant: Mangia

Upper left: Pinky Noll accepted the award for Upper Story Renovation

Upper right: Urban Sassafras won an award for Best New Business Retail

Right: Mangia won an award for Best New Business Restaurant



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LEISURE



Gary Bennett surrounded by the tools of his trade

It's all fun and games

By Gabe House

Rumpus room, rec room, den and now, finally, the man cave. All are terms synonymous with entertainment in the home. From the classics such as billiards to more recent arcade video games and pinball tables, Springfield businesses are making strides to meet demands in these home-based bastions of frivolity.

Gary Bennett has quite literally staked his claim in the market; his Man Cave Supply store at 1305 Adlai Stevenson Drive has been open for a little more than a year now. Apart from selling and rehabbing traditional arcade games – Pacman, Asteroids and the like – Bennett also works on pinball tables, neon signs and even custom furniture.

“Getting to play video games every day, working on them and talking to people about their rec rooms is always exciting,” said Bennett, who is the company’s sole employee in addition to being its proprietor. “There aren’t really any negatives to this business. I’m not dealing with business owners or any of that. It’s all just person to person contact. It’s pretty neat.”

Although his store bears the man cave moniker, Bennett said an exciting aspect of his business is giving the baby boomer generation a chance to share the games they loved as children with their own kids in the present day. The chance, as an adult, to own a game that once claimed entire daily allowances in a matter of hours is a

powerful thing. Saving quarters is still a concern, though.

“It’s almost like restoring a car, because it’s all on a budget,” Bennett said. “You can restore a car for five grand or a couple hundred thousand. It’s not that extreme with these machines, but a lot of my customers are trying to do this on a budget.”

Bennett said he typically has around 13 games in his shop at any given time as space is limited. The majority of them are stand-up arcade cabinets, since pinball tables are generally much larger ... and more expensive.

“There’s only one pinball manufacturer in the United States now, and brand new tables cost anywhere between \$5,000 to \$8,000,” Bennett said. “I have a Pacman in the store right now that would probably go for about \$850.”

While Man Cave Supply focuses more on the digital age of home entertainment games, Alan Rhodes, president of ABC Billiards, deals in a slightly more traditional game: pool. Rhodes said he doesn’t feel as if the rise of the popular if gender-exclusionary “man cave” term has really done much to buoy his business. Something else has, though.

“Pool tables have expanded since I began in the business in 1978 to where they are now pieces of furniture available in many styles and colors,” Rhodes said. “When you bought a pool table before,



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it was in only one color of wood. Now, there are probably three or four finishes with possibly three or four different leg setups, a choice on leather pockets with fringe or tassels on them. They are furniture instead of being hidden away in a basement all the time.”

Rhodes said the repair business of ABC Billiards has been doing well lately, but sales are a bit slow. Still, Rhodes explained, that is fairly typical in the months immediately after the holidays. He expects sales to start picking up around tax return season.

Rhodes also notes that with increased

competition, the business has become somewhat diluted. “There are more manufacturers in the market now and some of the stuff being sold is marginal, I would say, to be as nice as I can be,” Rhodes said. “When you stand back and just look at it, you really have no idea what the construction of that table is. And that’s where they get you with a lower-grade selection.” □

Gabe House works in the lending department at United Community Bank. He can be reached at 217-787-3000 or ghouse@ucbbank.com.



Radio host Glen MacNow refurbished his basement and added a pinball machine, fireplace and beer fridge, in Havertown, Pa.

PHOTO BY DAN Z. JOHNSON



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BUSINESS PROFILE



Dan White, Doug Gholson, Matt Cassiday and Rick Travis

Habegger Corporation celebrates new Springfield location

By Ginny Lee

The Habegger Corporation, the nation's 10th largest distributor of heating and air conditioner components, held the grand opening of its Springfield operation on Friday, Feb. 7, at its new facility at 2900 Old Rochester Road.

Contractors, industry sales representatives, and students and faculty from Midwest Technical Institute were on hand to meet the Habegger team. Habegger offers products by Carrier, Mitsubishi, Honeywell, Bryant and many other HVAC manufacturers.

"We are reaching out to students at Lincoln Land Community College, CAVC and Midwest Technical Institute," territory manager Doug Gholson said. Habegger hopes to form partnerships with contractors and students in the area.

"Our thing is to have plenty of rooftop units on hand," Gholson added. "If someone has a breakdown, they can come get a replacement the same day. Typically you'd have to wait a day or two. We are fully stocked and ready to serve



Devon Sanders, David Duffey, Andy Homer, Cody Curry, Brandon Foster and Matt Chandler



PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE

the community.”

Habegger is based in Indianapolis, so the Springfield store can get something the next day, if they don’t have it in stock. They also offer financing through FTL Financing to make installing a new HVAC system easier for the customer.

The company has added three new jobs to Springfield’s economy—Store Manager Dan White, Customer Service Rep Matt Cassaday and Gholson. The new facility is approximately 8,000 square feet.

The company will offer monthly training at its eastside facility for contractors. Training during the month of March will be about installing commercial rooftop units along with maintenance and cleaning of air conditioning units.

MTI instructors Dave Hayes and Jevaris Pettis brought dozens of students to see all the products offered at the new facility as well as for a chance to network with sales reps and contractors. Hayes said he was pleased his students could see how a warehouse operates and see

equipment and accessories MTI cannot provide on its campus.

Habegger offers geothermal heating systems. “With the price of gas and liquefied petroleum going up,” Gholson said, “people want efficient systems. We offer a full line, and geothermal is the most efficient.”

They also offer the highest efficiency air source heat pumps, according to Gholson. “Your energy bill can be cut in half or by two thirds by using an efficient heat pump system because you don’t have to use a second heat source,” he added.

In addition the Habegger facility offers air detox units for furnaces.

The new facility is approximately 8,000 square feet. “We have a five-year lease on this building,” Regional Manager Rick Travis said. “By the end of five years, we’ll need a lot more space,” he predicted. □

Ginny Lee is a Springfield writer and photographer with an entrepreneurial spirit.



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Out of Africa aspires to spotlight local African-American artists

By Scott Faingold

In early 2013, Lynn Williamson came to a disturbing realization while visiting art galleries in anticipation of a visit from her college-age artist daughter. “I would ask if there were any African-American artists represented,” she recalls, “and 100 percent of the places we went to either said ‘no’ or ‘well, there’s one – their stuff is on the back, in the attic, in the basement.’”

That experience was the start of a year-long effort to address this imbalance by finding ways to spotlight the kind of talented African-American artists that Williamson felt were being underserved in local exhibition spaces. “I went out on a quest to find artists in Springfield and throughout Sangamon County,” she says. “I was able to run across wonderful, wonderful people.” Now Williamson is in the process of opening her own gallery space, dubbed Out of Africa Heritage Arts Center, at 210 S. Sixth Street.

Following a successful trial run displaying six artists at October’s

African-American History Museum gala, Williamson and her collaborators worked on securing a space while exhibiting work in alternate spaces, most recently Café Andiamo and Marine Bank.

With hopes for a grand opening of Out of Africa before the end of March 2014, things have reached an exciting point. “This is going to be more than a gallery,” says Williamson. “We have programs in place, such as the Art of Healthy Living, geared toward exercising, and programs for youth and seniors as well as history taught through art.” There are also plans to host events both in the gallery proper and in the proposed adjacent wine lounge, to be called Zanzibar.

“It’s not just African-American artists that we are highlighting,” Williamson points out. “Our goal is to embrace all cultures and celebrate that.” She smiles. “We’re making it work!” □

Scott Faingold can be reached via scott@springfieldbusinessjournal.com.



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Far left: Artist Anthony Baxton

Above: Anthony Baxton, Sable Williamson, Lynn Williamson, "Choma," and Jeromé Holston of Out of Africa Gallery

Left: "Go with the Fro," oil on canvas by Anthony Baxton

PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE



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Tim Showalter, assistant manager of Edgar's Cafe in Chatham

PHOTOS BY GINNY LEE

Bean there, done that

Local coffee market accelerates

By Scott Faingold



Dan Higgins, owner and manager of Centrum Cafe

Options for coffee connoisseurs in the Springfield area are expanding at an unprecedented rate. Sure, there are three Starbucks locations (four if you count Barnes & Noble), but there are also plenty of alternatives. Local standbys such as downtown's venerable Andiamo and the extremely reliable Grab-A-Java are going strong and newer outlets have popped up offering fair trade sources, exclusive local flavors and, in one case, home delivery of freshly roasted coffee beans directly to your door.

The newest retail coffee establishment in town is also the most recent venture of Conn's Hospitality Group. **Wm. Van's Coffee House** (503 S. Seventh Street, Springfield) is inside the relocated and rehabbed Maisenbacher House, which was physically moved here from its original site five blocks away. Wm Van's offers baked goods in addition to coffee, all within a distinctive and homey, wood-based physical ambience. It happens to be situated directly next door to another fairly recent Conn establishment, restaurant and microbrewery Obed & Isaac's. "We just decided to try and capture an audience all day long," explains Casey Conn. "We offer breakfast and coffee in the morning and a little bit of lunch, and then

we've got Obed's next door for dinnertime." The coffee exclusively served here is named Wm. Van's Roast, specially prepared at Chauvin, a St. Louis-based roastery.

Who says there's no such thing as a free cup of coffee? Anyone stepping inside **Simply Fair** (2357 W. Monroe) during business hours is as likely as not to be offered a complimentary cup of Joe. The store, which opened in October 2013, specializes in all things fair trade, including apparel, jewelry and sundry other fair trade items from around the globe, in addition to coffee beans. According to co-proprietor Laura Camp, the coffee is handpicked by Steve Johnson, roaster for the Bunkhouse Joe fair trade coffee company. "Steve fire-roasts all our beans which means those beans never see an electrical element," says Camp. "It's kind of like the difference between a hot dog boiled in water and one roasted on a stick over a fire, absorbing flavor from the wood." Simply Fair stocks four or five coffee flavors at any given time from such locales as Ethiopia, Rwanda, Guatemala and Peru.

The Bean Counter's beans are roasted (and presumably counted) at the company's headquarters in Petersburg by company founder Brian Stickley. A longstanding staple at local health care facilities with



Kim Wilcox, manager at The Bean Counter, 1941 W. Iles Ave., Springfield

shops on the premises of Memorial Medical Center, St. John's Hospital and Springfield Clinic, The Bean Counter opened a bustling location at 1941 W. Iles Avenue in Springfield in the spring of 2012. "We get all of our coffee imported from different countries like Kenya and Bali," says manager Kim Wilcox. "It's our own roastery and our own flavoring." The Bean Counter additionally prides itself on steaming its own milk, brewing its own shots and the fact that all offerings from the bakery are made from scratch without preservatives. "It is as close to being homemade as possible," says Wilcox.

Another recent addition to the regional coffee scene is the new **Edgar's** in Chatham (75 West Plummer Blvd.). Like its sister café on Wabash, this Edgar's is owned by Goodwill Industries (and named for Goodwill founder Edgar Helms) but rather than being located within the larger retail space, the Chatham store "is more of a stand-alone model," according to assistant manager Tim Showalter. "It's still connected but it's not actually inside the Goodwill store," he explains. There is also a fireplace, a small stage used for Christian open mic

nights and a conference room which is available to rent, along with a "Book Nook" acting as a physical transition spot between café and resale store. Although the beans for their house blend come from Columbia Street Roastery in Champaign, Edgar's, which operates as a nonprofit, extends its parent company's charity mission through involvement with a company called Crop-to-Cup, which, according to Showalter, "focuses on educating farmers so they know how to produce a better quality coffee." Afterward, Crop-to-Cup buys all the coffee thus produced for prices which are above cost. "It's actually better than fair trade," Showalter states.

Centrum Café has been operating at 1370 Toronto Road in Springfield for more than six years, but this was far from the first foray into the coffee business for owner and manager Dan Higgins. "We started out in Springfield with a little coffee shop downtown in the Centrum building," Higgins recounts, "but my first coffee venture was about 30 years ago in Indianapolis. I lived in Canada for five years and spent a lot of time in Europe and Central America so I really got

continued on page 18



Casey Conn, Wm. Van's Coffee House, 503 S. Seventh St., Springfield

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Simply Fair, 2357 W. Monroe, Springfield

continued from page 17

into good coffee.” Indeed, the lack of good coffee in Indiana started him on this path. Centrum uses several different roasters and Higgins is very specific about quality. “Most of our coffees are fair trade, some are organic, and we have them roasted to our specifications and do all the blending ourselves so that way we know what we have,” he says. The coffee at Centrum is also low-acid, something which is less common than one might expect. “It’s important for a number of reasons,” says Higgins. “For one, you taste the flavor of the coffee and you’re not tasting acid. There’s one firm all over the U.S. that specializes in high-acid coffee,” he chuckles.

“We started roasting coffee at home last year, just as a hobby, to do something to get cheap, good coffee,” recounts Brent Boesdorfer of **Custom Cup**, the area’s first roast-to-order coffee service. “We really fell in love with the whole process, from sourcing the beans to roasting ‘em to actually brewing ‘em, just the whole thing,” he enthuses. Noticing that the Springfield coffee market was lacking in local micro-roasteries, Custom Cup rushed in to fill the gap. “You place an order at our web store (www.customcupcoffee.com/shop) and we roast it right then and deliver it to your door within 48 hours,” he says. “It’s the freshest you can possibly get without doing it yourself.” □

Scott Faingold is associate editor of Springfield Business Journal, staff writer at Illinois Times, instructor in the UIS Communication Department and vocalist for Epsom. He can be reached via scott@springfieldbusinessjournal.com.

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Springfield Association for Women in Communications offers communications scholarship

The Association for Women in Communications (AWC), Springfield Chapter has announced the opening of its 2014 scholarship award search. The scholarship competition awards \$1,000 to a junior, senior or graduate level college student from central Illinois or a student who is attending a college or university in central Illinois. Applicants must be majoring in communications, journalism, public relations or related fields and have an above-average GPA. Application deadline is Monday, March 31, 2014. The applicant must demonstrate a commitment to pursuing a professional career in communications through educational work and communications activities. Two essays, reference letters and current college transcripts also are required.

Trader promoted at Zelle Title

Zelle Title, LLC is pleased to announce the promotion of Janet L. Trader to the position of Customer Development Coordinator. Trader has been with Zelle Title for eight years and has experience in all phases of the title insurance process. Her focus will be not only marketing but also ensuring customer satisfaction. Zelle Title is a locally owned business serving Springfield and the surrounding counties since 1986.

Speakers Bureau announces annual showcase

The Capital City Speakers Bureau is holding its 19th Annual Showcase of Speakers and Trainers on Thursday, March 27, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The Showcase is designed to allow people who hire speakers – meeting planners, executives, training directors and human resources personnel – the chance to see and listen to a large number of speakers in one day. Event planners from associations, corporations, government and not-for-profit organizations attend this popular event. Fourteen speakers, trainers and corporate entertainers from across the country will be at the event. Each speaker will make a 20-minute presentation on current issues or hot topics. For more information or registration, contact CCSB at 544-8552 or visit www.capcityspeakers.com/showcase.htm.

Gold Center announces change in ownership

The Gold Center Inc., one of only nine primary distributors for the U.S. Mint for the world-wide American Gold, Platinum and Silver Eagles as well as precious metal sales and refining sale of precious metals and rare coins for 38 years, has been purchased by the Green family. Previous owner, Jim Hausman, will continue as the company's president and partial owner. "In the last 38 years, I've built this business to be one of the top precious metal dealers in the world," says Hausman. "Because of an injury a couple years ago, I needed to take a step back. I am extremely confident in Todd Green and his capabilities to take The Gold Center to the next level."

Farmland rent rates in Illinois remain strong

Lease rates for farmland in Illinois remained strong in 2013 and experts predict this trend to continue into 2014. Demand for high quality land to lease in the state is fueled by profitable farming operations due in part to lower input costs. Land owners who have not kept up with the market have found rates on some multi-year leases lagging as much as 50 to 60 percent. To find a cash rent report for Illinois or a graph, please visit <http://alberscommunications.com/media-center/farmers-national/2014-cash-rent-report/>

Hanson wins awards from ACEC of Illinois

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) of Illinois recently recognized Hanson Professional Services Inc. during the organization's annual Engineering Excellence Awards. Hanson is the recipient of an Honor Award for a roundabout project in Rockford, Ill. The city wanted to provide a safe, efficient means of travel through the intersection of Main and Auburn streets. The intersection improvement also needed to have the least negative impact on nearby properties and be conducive to business development and revitalization. The city selected Hanson to provide design services for the first dual-lane roundabout in Rockford and on a state highway in Illinois. Hanson also received a Merit Award for the Tier 2 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Springfield

Rail Improvements Project in Springfield, Ill. The city selected Hanson to provide a preliminary design report and prepare the Tier 2 EIS to study needed improvements on the rail corridor and how the city could best accommodate an expected increase in higher-speed trains. The EIS also addressed the challenges of safety, traffic congestion and train noise. Completed in 22 months, the EIS received a Record of Decision from the Federal Railroad Administration. The firm's corporate headquarters is located at 1525 S. Sixth St., Springfield, IL 62703. The office may be reached by phone: 217-788-2450 or fax: 217-788-2503.

Roselawn burial records and GPS guide now available on smart phone app

Roselawn Memorial Park has recently launched their new mobile app which allows

visitors to search the records and navigate to the grave using the GPS on their mobile device. At the graveside, the visitor can view the digital memorial to the deceased, including memories, stories, pictures and videos. Families can submit information to the memorial pages through the cemetery website, www.roselawninfo.com by clicking the Search Cemetery Records tab. With this new tool, the public has real-time access to Roselawn's genealogical records—allowing families to find the graves of loved ones and share their legacies for generations to come. For additional information about how to download or use the mobile app, please call the Roselawn Memorial Park Office at 217-525-1661. □

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Downtown Springfield's new art connoisseur

By Eric Woods



Alicia Bibb was a customer at Studio on 6th and loved not only the variety of work but also the great prices. "They are top notch artists. They could get so much more in Chicago," she said. Bibb loved the store so much that she purchased Studio on 6th on Sept. 16, 2013. "I am a networker, not an artist."

Studio on 6th is a co-operative where participating local artists receive 100 percent of the sale of their work in exchange for paying a monthly fee and working at the store one day per month. More than 50 artists feature their work, including students and those with special needs. Bibb has created a new reading room in the back of the store which features works from artists at SPARC and Springfield Christian School among others. "In the reading room we offer inexpensive art made by those with disabilities as well as students," she said. "I sometimes read to kids back there. The parents love that."

Bibb is passionate about living in Springfield. She loves the easy commute and the fact that getting anywhere in town does not require a long drive. She finds the variety of culture in Springfield, from the restaurants to the arts to the theater selections, is also a positive local feature. "I got a job here right after college and

stayed," she said. Of the few things Bibb does not enjoy about Springfield, the current property tax structure and the public school system top the list. "Education is a big issue. Finding people who are not corrupt is another thing."

As a child, Bibb wanted to be a horse trainer. "I love horses. They are beautiful animals," she said. One of her greatest achievements as a child was moving into advanced jumping while she was a horseback rider. "I was jumping a fence, and the horse stopped at the last minute. I stayed with it, took him back, and then we got over the fence."

While in college, her concentration was on stable management. Her first venture into the business world was at Arthur Treacher's Fish and Chips in Aurora. Unfortunately that was also the worst job she ever had. "All they ever did was give away food. I had to clean up everyone's mess." She feels fortunate to have found a job where she always feels as if she is on vacation.

Bibb learned about the importance of a good work ethic early in life. Both parents worked and her father was self-employed. "You need a good business sense. Be fair and honest, and do not undercut anyone," she said. Bibb warns those wanting to start

a business that it will not be completed overnight and that it will take time. "The blood, sweat and tears people pour into their business pay off. Treat others the way you want to be treated, which leads back to putting God at the center of everything. He will not fail you." One of her greatest achievements was becoming a Pink Cadillac Mary Kay sales director. Bibb feels that it helped her to motivate and encourage women to succeed.

Studio on 6th will celebrate its 10-year anniversary ribbon cutting with Downtown Springfield, Inc. on Wednesday, April 2, at 10:30 a.m. On the personal side, Bibb and her family will head to the Gulf Shores in Florida for spring break. They will also be camping in Michigan with four other families over July 4th.

Bibb never intends to fully retire but may slow down a bit over time. "In 10 years I plan to still be playing with Studio on 6th or possibly semi-retired and travelling in the RV with my husband," said Bibb. "I do love downtown Springfield. Maybe I will play half the year and dabble half the year." □

Eric Woods is a freelance writer from Springfield. He can be reached at ericw93@aol.com.

Alicia Bibb

Title: Owner, Studio on 6th
Telephone: 217-522-8006
E-mail: studioon6thart@gmail.com

Born: Feb. 8, 1962
Location: Joliet, Ill.
Education: B.A. in animal science and communication from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale

Family: Husband - Brady;
Children - Christopher, Sarah, Carter and Grace

FAVORITES:
Hobby: Running
Book: The Bible
Restaurant: The Mangia

TIDBITS:
Loves Bruce Willis movies
Wants to travel to Europe
Son plays in a band

Built to Last...

In 2010 Joe and Seanna Malek purchased their house and decided to make some improvements. While being "under construction" the past few years, they both appreciate working for local companies that take care of their employees. Seanna works for a local oil company, Bi-Petro, in the accounting department and Joe works in office equipment/IT sales for RK Dixon.

Throughout the remodeling process, the couple was grateful to have the support of their families. Joe's parents live just across the street; and when their previous home sold sooner than expected, the couple was able to move in with his parents temporarily. Native to Ireland, Seanna's father Tom worked as a bricklayer and designed all the stonework throughout the house. With its beautiful masonry and gracious living spaces, the Malek's home is truly one of a kind. Now that they are nearing project completion, Joe and Seanna are happy to be living back at home with their 3-year-old daughter Addie.

The Maleks valued working with First Bankers Trust Company for their construction loan. Doing all of the remodeling work

on their own, Seanna says, "First Bankers just gave us a chance and were so simple to work with!" After having such a positive experience with their loan, they decided to move their checking account to First Bankers Trust as well. Seanna has been pleased with the bank's customer service and says, "They are just really nice! It's like a little hometown bank - everyone knows your name - and Addie likes the suckers!"

They have enjoyed getting to know Mark DiMarzio, and Joe says, "We have stuff in common - he's an umpire; I umpire. He's a Notre Dame fan; I'm a Notre Dame fan... He's really great to work with. He's just a nice guy!" Joe is pleased to add, "Any type of future loans, they're going to be the first place we call. They treated us so well that there really is no need to go anywhere else."

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NEW BUSINESS LISTINGS

February

Filing Date: 2/13/14
Business Name: Magical Glow
Addr: 2506 Farragut Dr. City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62704 Phone: 415-6757
Business Owner
Crystal L. Chaffin

Filing Date: 2/11/14
Business Name: A And A Lawn Service
Addr: 527 S. Lincoln City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62704 Phone: 717-5335
Business Owner
Timothy Jording

Filing Date: 2/07/14
Business Name: Dumb Records
Addr: 1107 S. Grand Ave W City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62704 Phone: 622-3275
Business Owners
Kevin Bradford
Brian Galecki
Nathan Landolt
Charles Vanmeter

Business Name: Native Ink
Addr: 6069 Cardinal Hill Rd City/St/Zip: Rochester Il 62563 Phone: 217/494-0408
Business Owner
Bonnie Waldmire-Miller

Filing Date: 2/06/14
Business Name: The Hair Room
Addr: 955 Durkin Drive City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62704 Phone: 217/971-9726 Suite G
Business Owner
Amanda Deornellas-Franklin

Filing Date: 2/03/14
Business Name: Alexander’s Complete Home And Office Remodel And Repair
Addr: 3430 Peoria City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62702 Phone: 415-0433
Active Date: 2/13/14
Lot 70
Business Owner
Ronald J Alexander

Business Name: Ncr-Ntense Computer Repair
Addr: 1914 Jeanette Lane #2 City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62702 Phone: 217/820-1607
Active Date: 2/13/14
Business Owner
Zachary Thomas

Business Name: She Got The Nerve
Addr: 1509 Chalmers Street City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62703 Phone: 217/299-3629
Active Date: 2/13/14
Business Owner
Tara Allbritton

January

Filing Date: 1/31/14
Business Name: Mcquality Education Services L.L.C.
Addr: 44 Birch Lake Dr. City/St/Zip: Sherman Il 62684 Phone: 454-8362 Active Date: 2/13/14
Business Owner
Rodney D Mcquality

Filing Date: 1/30/14
Business Name: Carol Copelin Real Estate
Addr: 2100 W. Iles City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62704 Phone: 553-1469 Active Date: 2/13/14
Business Owner
Carol Copelin

Filing Date: 1/29/14
Business Name: Adventurous Learning Unlimited Childcare

Addr: 626 E. Wood Ave City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62702 Phone: 217/523-2774
Active Date: 2/05/14
Business Owner
Terrea F Shannon-Durbin

Filing Date: 1/27/14
Business Name: Top Notch Heating & Cooling
Addr: 31 Whiting Dr. City/St/Zip: Divernon Il 62530 Phone: 414-7562 Active Date: 2/05/14
Business Owners
Gary Busch
Sharon Busch

Filing Date: 1/24/14
Business Name: Autism and ADD Center of Illinois
Addr: 920 S. Spring City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62704 Phone: 789-7323 Active Date: 2/05/14
Business Owner
Susan Smarjesse

Business Name: Comprehensive Financial Organizing
Addr: 310 S. Grand Ave West City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62704 Phone: 217/299-1366
Active Date: 2/05/14
Business Owner
Maureen E. Williams

Business Name: J & J Construction
Addr: 1848 Hastings City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62702 Phone: 217/303-9063 Active Date: 2/05/14
Business Owner
John Pehlman

Filing Date: 1/23/14
Business Name: Carter Family Towing
Addr: 600 Carroll St. City/St/Zip: Pawnee Il 62558 Phone: 625-7574
Business Owner
Prenice Carter

Business Name: Creekside Concealed Carry
Addr: 12734 Johns Creek Rd. City/St/Zip: Auburn Il 62615 Phone: 899-6519 Active Date: 2/05/14
Business Owner
James R. Bryan

Business Name: Stults Hr Consulting
Addr: 639 Centerwood City/St/Zip: Springfield Il 62711 Phone: 217/415-0891
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Business Owner
Jamie Stults

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Springfield Business Journal | March 2014 | 21

Bringing nostalgia back to downtown

By Eric Woods



Will Decker has lived in Springfield for the past five years. The location, cost of living, and familiarity of the city are all positive aspects for him and his wife, Jessie. “We are within four hours of six major cities,” he said. Decker feels that more cultural options in the area, however, would be nice. “The Hoogland, Legacy Theatre, and UIS have good shows, but aside from that it is hard to get larger regional and national acts here.” Decker would also like to see Springfield open an independent movie house and feels that the downtown area of Springfield should be a major focus moving forward.

Growing up, Decker wanted to be a sports writer. His first job was as a bank teller while he was still in high school. His worst employment experience, however, was selling gym memberships while in Chicago. “It was all a hustle,” he said. “We literally had to get people off the street, get them into the gym, and try to sell them memberships.” For the past two years, though, Decker has been on a new mission.

The Deckers reopened Norb Andy’s Tabarin on March 12, 2012. The restaurant serves a variety of pub fare, but the difference from many others in the city is that almost everything, from the breadings to the sauces, is homemade. Norb Andy’s also features live

music and pub quiz trivia nights, which have become very popular, according to Decker.

Holidays and other city events also keep the business booming. Recently the restaurant held a three-course dinner for Valentine’s Day, and they will also be very busy in March with St. Patrick’s Day on the horizon. Yet another upcoming event that will keep them busy is Springfield PrideFest 2014 this May. “There will be good music, crafts, and local businesses will come with items to sell,” said Decker. “That was where we adopted our dog last year.”

As an owner, Decker handles all the manager and general manager duties. “I manage the staff, finances, inventory, and anything of that nature,” he said. There have been some challenges owning a business in the current economy, but overall Decker feels that everything is going well. “We are getting a large customer base.” Having to balance multiple priorities is not new to Decker; either. Growing up he successfully balanced academia with athletics, as he played both baseball and basketball in school.

Over the next several years, the main focus of the business for Decker is to get Norb Andy’s back to the luster of its heyday. He would also like to eventually have children and see his entire family enjoy success in

both their personal and professional lives. Something Decker learned early on that he would like to pass along is having patience. “Learn how to face any situation with an even temperament,” he said. “Be understanding and empathetic.”

Although Decker enjoys running the business, he understands that everyone needs to take a break once in a while to avoid burnout. “Spend time with your family so you do not come to a point where you resent the business,” he said. “Take time for yourself. You cannot always do everything.” Decker will be taking his own advice when he heads to Austin, Texas, to stand up at his college roommate’s wedding in May.

Avoiding burnout could also help to avoid the feeling that life could not get any worse, according to Decker. “Always consider, no matter how bad things are, there is someone with a worse situation than you,” he said. “Be grateful for what you have.”

For Decker, Norb Andy’s could be a long term venture until retirement. “Health permitting, I may retire in my late 60s or early 70s,” he said. “I may still maintain ownership but just step back a bit. I will probably work part-time or do some volunteering.” □

Contact Eric Woods at ericw93@aol.com.

Will Decker

Title: Owner, Norb Andy's Tabarin
Address: 518 East Capitol, Springfield, Ill., 62701
Telephone: 217-679-3449
E-mail: will@norbandys.com

DOB: Dec. 16, 1983
Location: Durham, NC
Education: B.A. in English from University of Missouri-Columbia
Family: Wife - Jessie

Favorites:
TV Show: Key & Peele
Sports team: Cincinnati Reds
Song/Band: Pearl Jam

Tidbits:
Loves music and plays the guitar
Wants to someday write a three-act play
Was the runner-up for Hottest Bartender in the Illinois Times Best of Springfield 2013

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St. John’s Hospital provides \$38.9 million in community benefit
Through a series of programs and services offered in fiscal year 2013, St. John’s Hospital increased access to care for the underserved, enhanced health and wellness in the community, and advanced medical education and knowledge. These efforts, collectively known as Community Benefit, were outlined in St. John’s Hospital annual Community Benefit report and include their roles in the East Side Farmers’ Market and the Kohl’s Gotta Dance community program along with subsidizing care for Medicare patients.

Memorial’s 2013 Festival of Trees raises \$308,000, setting new record
Memorial Medical Center’s 24th annual Festival of Trees raised \$308,000 to be used for health-related projects and programs in the community. The nine-day event is made possible through the support of sponsors, designers, dedicated committee members, and more than 1,000 volunteers. Proceeds from Festival of Trees have been used to support programs like Memorial’s regional Cancer Center, hospice care and Independence Square along with Memorial’s Foundation health care grants.

Orthopedic Center of Illinois foundation announces 2013 scholarship opportunity
The Orthopedic Center of Illinois Foundation (OCIF) is now accepting

application for the annual OCIF Scholarship. The OCIF Scholarship will recognize a graduating senior in Sangamon County pursuing a career in the health care field. The winning student must be a graduating high school student, be a resident of Sangamon County, and attend an accredited college or university in fall 2014 as a full-time student majoring in a health-related field. The \$1,000 scholarship is renewable, up to four years, provided that the student is in good standing. For more information about this opportunity or to download an application, please visit the OCIF web site: www.ocif.net. The deadline to apply is March 21, 2014. The winner will be announced by May 9.

Gonzales appointed to SIU Department of Surgery
Debra Anne Gonzalez, MD, has joined Southern Illinois University School of Medicine as an assistant professor in the Department of Surgery. She will provide care for head and neck cancer patients at Simmons Cancer Institute in Springfield. Gonzalez worked in private practice as a head and neck surgeon with Middle Tennessee Ear Nose and Throat P.C. (1996-2001) and as a psychoanalytical psychotherapist in Nashville, Tenn. (2003-08). She was assistant professor of head and neck oncology-microvascular reconstructive surgery at the University of Tennessee in Memphis (1995-96).

Dixon appointed to SIU’s Quincy Department of Family and Community Medicine
William Dixon, MD, has joined the faculty at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine as an assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine in Quincy. He is also a member of SIU HealthCare, the medical school’s practice group. Dixon has most recently been a hospitalist for CogentHMG at Blessing Hospital in Quincy (2011-14). Prior to that, he worked in family medicine and the emergency department at Scotland County Memorial Hospital in Memphis, Mo. (2004-11). Dixon and his wife, Ann, live in Mendon with their three children.

Cormeny designated as Certified Healthcare Constructor
Harold O’Shea Builders announced that Tyler Cormeny, Director of Operations, has been designated as a Certified Healthcare Constructor (CHC) by the American Hospital Association. The CHC is a national accreditation that distinguishes an individual as being among the elite in the field of health care construction. To earn the CHC, an individual must satisfy eligibility requirements that incorporate a blend of professional experience and education, agree to adhere to the AHA Professional Standards of Conduct, and pass the CHC Certification Examination.

Beck joins SIU faculty
Stephen D. W. Beck, M.D., has joined the faculty at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine as an associate professor of urology in the Department of Surgery. He will provide medical care at St. Mary’s Hospital in Decatur, Simmons Cancer Institute and at SIU’s affiliated hospitals and clinics in Springfield. He is the director of regional urology for the Division of Urology at SIU. Beck was an associate professor of Urology at Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis (2003-14) and director of its urologic oncology fellowship (2009-14).

SIU School of Medicine launches first hand transplant program in Illinois
The Institute for Plastic Surgery at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine has launched the first clinical hand transplant program in Illinois for patients who have suffered from an amputation of their upper extremity. This program, which would be the 11th in the nation, builds on a long-standing history of successful replantation, or re-attachment, of amputated digits, hands and upper extremities by the plastic and reconstructive hand surgeons at SIU, according to Dr. Michael W. Neumeister, professor and chair of SIU’s Department of Surgery, The Elvin G. Zook Endowed Chair in Plastic Surgery and surgical director of the Hand Transplant Program at SIU School of Medicine. □

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RESIDENTIAL BUILDERS



David Cation is building a "passive home" in Chatham

PHOTO BY GINNY LEE

New homes, new trends

Energy efficiency, smart budgeting lead the way

By Gabe House

Regardless of budget, there is one consistent theme Springfield-area homebuilders are encountering: energy efficiency. From geothermal heating to insulation, builders are seeing more energy-savvy clients.

"I think people have really stepped up to the plate," said Michael Ryan, owner of Ryan Homes & Development. "They're doing six-inch walls, extra insulation and geothermal heating systems. I don't think we've built a house in the past two years without geothermal."

Doug Hill, owner of Macy Construction, said customers will often ask about geothermal systems. As always, it comes down to dollars and cents. Although geothermal systems can save customers money in energy bills over the years, the initial installation can often run double that of traditional heating systems.

"The geothermal has been something that comes up about 30 percent of the time and typically with the price point of it, we'll go back to conventional, high-efficiency natural gas furnaces that perform very well," Hill said. "If you do get somebody that is really energy-conscious, we always tell them that the insulation is the best thing that you can do. There are so many insulation systems out there, and your money is much better spent there, as we see it."

Cation Construction, owned by David Cation, is taking energy efficiency to the extreme. Cation is building a new home for himself on Wesley Chapel Road that is termed a "passive house." Increasingly popular in Europe, passive homes are essentially airtight domiciles with strict codes regarding airflow and energy consumption for heating and cooling.

For anecdotal evidence of the standards in these structures, Cation joked that body heat was the typical heating system employed in passive homes. "I took some classes a couple years ago, so now I'm certified to build a passive home,"

Cation said. "They call it the code standard of 2050. I'm not sure if people (here) are aware homes like this are possible, but I'm going to find out." Cation said the abnormally cold winter has slowed their progress on the home, but he's hoping for a build completion in late spring.

Outside of energy efficiency, Hill said he has seen more customers taking increasingly conservative approaches to building a new home. More modern designs are leading to straighter, cleaner lines, so millwork and crown molding are often left by the wayside. "The amenities aren't as outlandish as what they were even a year or so ago," Hill said. "It seems like people are more in tune with what they need rather than what they want."

Ryan, who said he almost exclusively builds for empty nesters and older clients in high-end subdivisions, still has customers who are eager to add the creature comforts. Expansive home theaters, large master bathrooms and elaborate kitchens are the order of the day for him.

"We're building a really, really nice house now ... it's not only a home theater, but there are in-house intercoms to pipe music through the house, and it's tied in with the TV, as is the alarm system," Ryan said. "If they're upstairs, they can press a button and see who's at the front door. It's all tied into one system. And that's really big lately."

Ryan said he has stayed busy despite a downward trend in new homes being built in Springfield. Hill also said his business has remained steady even as budgets have shrunk. "The biggest thing for us, the key point of everything, is to build a house that fits everyone's budget," Hill said. "That's the key point, to continue to be steady; if you tell someone 'no' then obviously you're not going to keep working." □

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Building the American dream from the ground up

By Eric Woods



Phil Zinn lives in Sherman and truly enjoys the area. “It feels like home. It is big enough to meet all of our needs but with a small town feel,” he said. If there is one issue with central Illinois it would be the talk of raising taxes. “I do not know if that is good or bad. It would raise revenue.” From a builder’s standpoint, Zinn feels there is a lack of improvements to get roads completed and up to the newer subdivisions. For example, those driving to Centennial Park have to drive down an oil and chip road.

As a kid, Zinn wanted to be a football player, but in high school he was a wrestler. He learned quickly that there is a difference between being in running shape and being in wrestling shape. “Before I had learned the

difference I was losing, but I turned it around and eventually even went to state,” he said.

Zinn had several jobs growing up, including dishwasher at a local restaurant as well as a pizza delivery boy. After college he taught industrial arts classes at Pleasant Plains and Williamsville high schools. He left teaching in 2003 to start his own company. He currently owns Zinn Construction and also runs several rental properties. The construction company has been in business since 2003 and currently has 11 employees. “We are 80 to 90 percent new homes. The other 10 to 20 percent are additions and remodels,” said Zinn. “Our niche is the Springfield and Sherman area. We are growing steadily each year.” Zinn handles

everything from digging the holes to the moving in process.

While he runs almost everything out of his house, Zinn has a building to move into should business expand enough. “It is a woodworking shop with plenty of shop area,” he said. “We may eventually move out there if we grow too much.”

Interest rates and technological advances are a couple things that Zinn thinks about when it comes to the future. “It is neat and scary at the same time,” he said. Zinn intends to keep the construction company going as it has been very successful over the first 10 years in existence. “If you work hard and stay at it long enough, you will succeed.”

Zinn’s father as well as his father-in-law, Jim Johnson, have been great influences over the years and have advised him well. “My father was a minister, and my father-in-law has a great temperament and view on life,” he said. Zinn recommends that those interested in getting into the construction industry to find employment in the field, even if it is entry level to start. “Just get a job in the area you want to pursue. Get involved so you can see if it is really what you want to do.”

There are a number of big events coming up this year for Zinn. In 2009, the company acquired Old Hickory, a condominium development located directly on The Rail Golf Course in Springfield, which should be completed this year. “It is a great opportunity if you are looking for a condo,” Zinn said. Also on the horizon is an autumn trip to Ireland,

his first visit there.

Work will continue for several more years, and Zinn may never fully abandon the construction business. “I will probably semi-retire around 60,” said Zinn. “I will always do something. Maybe I will work 20 hours a week.” □

Contact Eric Woods at ericw93@aol.com.

Phil Zinn

Title: Owner, Zinn Construction
Telephone: 217-496-3112
Email: phil@zinnconstruction.com

Born: Dec. 14, 1975
Location: Beloit, Wis.
Education: B.S. in Industrial Technology from Eastern Illinois University
Family: Wife - Katie;
Children - Sophia and Will

Favorites:
Hobby: Woodworking and running
Movie: *Forrest Gump*
Restaurant: Fire and Ale
Sports team: Chicago Bears

Tidbits:
Hopes to visit Europe and travel through England, France, and Greece
Belongs to Springfield Area Homebuilders and the Springfield Art Association

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1	Buraski Builders, Inc. 3757 S. Sixth St. Springfield IL 62703	217-529-5172 217-529=9356	buraski.com buraskibuilders@yahoo.com	29	Frank Buraski, Pres.; Barbara Buraski, Sec./Treas.; Jason Buraski, Heather Sobieski	50%	50%	1981
2	Moughan Builders Inc. 3140 Cockrell Lane Springfield IL 62711	217-899-5484 217-793=6013	moughanbuilders.com jim@moughanbuilders.com	21	James E. Moughan, David P. Moughan	10%	90%	1992
3	Michael von Behren Builder, Inc. 3537 S. Douglas Ave. Springfield IL 62704	217-698-8484 217-698=8486	mvbbuilder.com mike@mvbbuilder.com	19	Michael J. von Behren, Pres.; Cheri M. von Behren, Sec./Treas.	80%	20%	1982
4	Griffitts Construction Co., Inc. 1501 N. Dirksen Pkwy. Springfield IL 62702	217-522-1431 217-522=5809	griffitts.net griffitts@griffitts.net	12	Harry Griffitts, Vicky Griffitts-Runyon	95%	5%	1953
5	Zinn Construction, LLC 1323 Hawthorne Chase Sherman IL 62684	217-496-3112 866-359=0816	zinnconstruction.com phil@zinnconstruction.com	11	Phil Zinn	10%	90%	2003
6	Bobby Shaw Property Maintenance and Remodeling 3351 S. Sixth St. Frontage Rd E., Suite 5 Springfield IL 62704	217-546-3973 217-546=6410	bobbyshawmaintenance.com bobby@bsmaint.com	10	Bobby Shaw, Owner	90%	10%	1987
6	Ryan Homes & Development, Inc. 500 W. Monroe, Suite 2W Springfield IL 62704	217-523-3976 217-523=3990	homesanddevelopment.com paula.ryan2321@gmail.com	10	Mike Ryan, Paula Ryan	10%	90%	1974
7	Creasey Construction of IL., Inc. PO Box 9286 Springfield IL 62791	217-546-1277 217-546=1760	creaseyconstruction.com creaseyconst@comcast.net	9	Jan Creasey, Pres., Lisa Creasey	60%	40%	1983
8	Craig Ladage Builders, Inc. 14915 Kennedy Road Auburn IL 62615	217-438-9206 217-438=5706	craigladagebuildersandstorage.com clbuilders@royell.org	8	Craig Ladage, Debbie Ladage	40%	60%	1977
9	Illinois Builders & Contractors, Inc. 4120 S. Second St. Springfield IL 62703	217-585-9490 217-529=9456	ilbuildersandcontractors.com ilbuilders2@yahoo.com	7	Fred Pryor	90%	10%	2003
10	All-C Construction, Inc. 3004 Great Northern Drive Springfield IL 62711	217-787-1900 217-787=1901	allcconstruction.com allcconstruction@att.net	6	Frank Conder, Paula Conder	20%	80%	1999
10	Timber Creek Home Sales, Inc. 2800 Via Rosso, Suite 1 Springfield IL 62703	217-585-8900 217-585=8908	timbercreekliving.com frank@timbercreekliving.com	6	Douglas Daniels, President; Frank Hoover, Sales Manager	0%	100%	1999
11	D & S Builders 30 White Road Glenarm IL 62536	217-529-6288 217-697=8149	todd@d-sbuilders.com or dan@d-sbuilders.com	5	Todd Dudley, Owner, Dan Schrage, Owner	40%	60%	1995
11	Hasara Construction Co. Inc. 125 E. Main St. Rochester IL 62563	217-498-1472 217-498=1472	hasaraconstruction.com j.stites@comcast.net	5	John H. Stites, Jr., Pres./Owner	5%	95%	1976
11	Roth Homes 350 Williams Lane Chatham IL 62629	217-483-6086 217-483=5200	rothhomesinc.com	5	Terry Roth	25%	75%	1984
12	Coady Construction Co. Inc 143 Circle Drive Springfield IL 62703	217-502-0602	adamcoadyconstruction.com coadyconstruction@comcast.net	4	Adam Coady	20%	80%	2006

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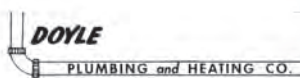
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Residential real estate looking up

By Scott Faingold

As 2014 gets underway in earnest, the residential real estate market in Springfield is full of seeming contradictions and counterintuitive information. However, at least from the perspective of a trio of area real estate brokers, there is reason for optimism.

Steve Myers, current president of the Capital Area Association of Realtors, is straightforward. “We’re bullish on 2014 in the capital area,” he says. “Last year our sales were up, and we’re seeing that continue. We actually sold more homes last year in the capital area than in 2012, even though interest rates were up. You would generally think, well, rates went up, there should be a slowdown. Well, in fact we actually sold more. We’re looking for that again.”

Myers explains that the correlation of increased interest rates with higher sales is not as inexplicable as it might seem. Basically, he explains, low rates can inspire sluggishness on the part of buyers, while rising rates can cause them to hurry up and purchase before rates get higher still. “In the past, when interest rates were hovering at

record lows, there may have been people that were unmotivated to purchase. However, there is sometimes a triggering effect when rates start to rise that gets them to jump on board and actually make that purchase.”

Of course, purchasing itself is only one aspect of residential real estate market and the CAAR is taking steps to address this, with plans to add a residential rental search feature. “This is something we have not offered previously and we feel it is a needed element as it relates to opportunities to find available rental homes in the Springfield area.”

Another significant piece of the local residential real estate puzzle is the foreclosure market which currently makes up about 15-20 percent of the overall market. Stephanie Do deals primarily in foreclosures. “If you know this market, it has been pretty high in the last couple years, but it is tapering off and slowing down some,” she says, “Not that the foreclosure market is going away anytime soon. It’s probably going to be another few more years down the road before you can actually start seeing things bouncing back to



more of a normal market.”

Do has worked in real estate for 16 years and concentrated on foreclosures for the last 14. “The past few years have been very, very busy for us as far as the foreclosure market is concerned but it has peaked and now it’s declining,” she explains. “But there is still a backlog of inventory stuck in the court system.”

As one of the top realtors in Sangamon County, rising star Kyle Killebrew has reason to be confident. “I’ll just say overall it’s been surprisingly steady even with the poor

weather,” he says. “Luckily in Springfield our average range of price is such that we haven’t seen much fluctuation so sales have really stayed steady.” He recounts a recent experience where a home sold before the sign even went into the yard. “It’s like regardless of anything, rate, weather, whatever, if the price is right, the location is right and the property’s in the right condition – in Springfield, Illinois, properties will sell fast.” □

Scott Faingold can be reached via scott@springfieldbusinessjournal.com



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	BUSINESS NAME STREET ADDRESS CITY/ST/ ZIP	PHONE (-) FAX (=)	WEBSITE (www.) E-MAIL	MANAGING PARTNER(S) / OWNER(S)	NUMBER OF LICENSED AGENTS	TOTAL TRANSACTIONS	SALES VOLUME	% OF BOARD	YEAR EST'D
1	The Real Estate Group, Inc. 3701 W. Wabash Ave. Springfield IL 62711	217-787-7000 217-787=7779	thegroup.com info@thegroup.com	Michael J. Buscher, Managing Broker; 23 individual broker/owners	120	1,759	\$280,297,211	36.97%	1997
2	Re/Max Professionals 2475 W. Monroe St. Springfield IL 62704	217-787-7215 217-787=8957	viewspringfieldhomes.com	Michael D. Oldenettel, Managing Broker / Owner; Linda Young	82	1,445	\$201,375,536	26.56%	1986
3	Coldwell Banker Honig-Bell 3201 Old Jacksonville Road Springfield IL 62711	217-547-6655 217-547=6659	cbhonig-bell.com	Don Cave, Managing Broker	45	367	\$55,469,024	7.32%	2000
4	Re/Max Results Plus 1046 W. Morton Ave. Jacksonville IL 62650	217-245-9613 217-243=7183	remax.com	Scott Eoff, Managing Broker / Owner	4	215	\$23,534,300	3.10%	1996
5	Grady Realtors Inc. 1501 S. MacArthur Blvd. Springfield IL 62704	217-753-2121 217-726=2211	gradyrealtors.com sold@gradyrealtors.com	Patrick Grady, Betty Grady	6	112	\$16,309,300	2.15%	1969
6	Charles E. Robbins Real Estate Inc. 2144 S. MacArthur Blvd. Springfield IL 62704	217-525-2112 217-525=2275	charlesrobbins.com res@charlesrobbins.com	Art Seppi, Managing Broker	17	144	\$15,701,728	1.36%	1962
7	Kennedy Real Estate LLC 400 W. Market, P.O. Box 764 Taylorville IL 62568	217-824-8888 217-824=5080	kennedyrealestatellc.com info@kennedyrealestatellc.com	Helen Kennedy, Managing Broker	15	132	\$13,818,250	1.82%	2011
8	Campo Realty, Inc. 610 Sixth St. Pawnee IL 62558	217-625-4663 217-625=4664	camporealty.com nick@camporealty.com	Nicholas Campo, Managing Broker	9	111	\$12,431,951	1.64%	2001
9	Do Realty Services Inc. 600 S. Sixth St. Springfield IL 62701	217-391-3636 217-391=3666	dorealty.net reo@dorealty.net	Stephanie L. Do	3	262	\$12,084,313	1.59%	2002
10	Steve Hills, REALTORS 900 S. Main St. Jacksonville IL 62650	217-245-9589 217-245=4198	stevehillsrealtors.com hills@jInc.net	Dianne Steinberg	5	101	\$10,076,701	1.33%	1965
11	Blane Real Estate Inc. 703 Old Salem Road Petersburg IL 62675	217-652-7521 217-632=3813	blaneinpetersburgil.com homes@blaneinpetersburgil.com	Judy Blane-Olesen, Peter Olesen	3	70	\$9,679,500	1.28%	1950
12	Century 21 Real Estate Associates 2030 Timberbrook Springfield IL 62702	217-789-7200 217-789=2600	reahouses.com kgraham367@aol.com	Kevin Graham	21	64	\$9,006,300	1.19%	2004
13	Grojean Realty and Insurance 360 W. State, P.O. Box 697 Jacksonville IL 62651	217-245-4151 217-243=7573	grojeanagency.com grojean@grojeanagency.net	Charles Grojean, Tom Grojean	9	83	\$8,987,000	1.19%	1947
14	Wrightsmen-Musso, Ltd. 159 N. Springfield St. Virden IL 62690	217-965-4115 217-965=5021	wmlrealty.com tmusso@wrightsmanmusso.com	Dom M. Musso, Todd M. Musso	16	121	\$8,189,637	1.08%	1940
15	Craggs REALTORS, Inc. 904 Springfield Road, PO Box 109 Taylorville IL 62568	217-824-8131 217-824=9315	craggsrealtors.com skcraggs@aol.com	Stephen B. Craggs	7	86	\$7,488,850	0.99%	1971
16	The Real Estate Firm Inc. 1340 S. State St. Springfield IL 62704	217-547-5500 217-522=5906	dennislpolk@gmail.com	Dennis L. Polk	18	44	\$5,707,350	0.75%	1989
17	Snelling-Chevalier Real Estate Inc. 621 Seventh St. Pawnee IL 62558	217-625-2411 217-625=7513	gail@family-net.net	Gail Chevalier Zini	6	48	\$4,432,350	0.58%	1986
18	Curvey Real Estate, Inc. 611 Springfield Road, P. O. Box 677 Taylorville IL 62568	217-824-4996 217-287=2111	curveyrealestate.com curvey@ctitech.com	Bernard A. Curvey, Owner/Broker; Joe Curvey, Managing Broker	11	51	\$4,304,500	0.57%	1985
19	Springfield Real Estate, LLC 410 South Grand Ave. West Springfield IL 62704	217-525-2288 217-535=4179	springfieldsbesthomes.com info@springfieldsbesthomes.com	Dowd Sullivan	6	27	\$4,139,000	0.55%	1988
20	Prairie Property Solutions 1027 Junction Circle Springfield IL 62704	217-670-1865 217-670=0771	ppsrealty.com	M. T. Vann, Managing Broker	5	27	\$3,473,500	0.46%	2012
21	Advantage Realty 933 South Grand Ave. West Springfield IL 62704	217-528-1000 217-528=1026	528-1000.com advantagerealty1@hotmail.com	Marty Benoit	10	31	\$3,350,101	0.44%	1987
22	Prudential Classic Properties 230 W. College Jacksonville IL 62650	217-243-0500 217-243=1580	pruclassicproperties.com jp@jamespate.com	James D. Pate	6	49	\$3,013,000	0.40%	2004

Sources: The real estate agencies; Illinois Association of Realtors website (<http://www.illinoisrealtor.org/>), MLS Firm Market Share Report. + - does not include commercial division. ++ - does not include properties solely owned and sold through the developer. *Out of Town Firm (agents having reciprocal agreements in this area) - 160 total transactions / \$16,432,560 sales volume / 2.17% of Board
(Ranked by sales volume Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, 2013.)

The insulator of central Illinois

By Eric Woods



Fiore Belmonte always wanted to be a successful business person. At the age of 15 he landed his first job working in farm labor and in 1999 he worked as a route salesman for Pepsi, which was actually the least favorite job in his career. “That was very monotonous. There was no change,” said Belmonte. “People were buying it and putting it in their stores anyway. It did not matter who was there trying to sell it.” He has spent the last 19 years working in insulation, including his current position as general manager at Prairie Insulation.

Belmonte has lived in Springfield for nine years, having moved to the city for his present job. “There are good people in Springfield,” he said. “The weather is one of my least favorite

things, though. I grew up in Tucson.” Belmonte also sees lack of growth along with difficulty attracting new businesses as troubling issues for Springfield.

Prairie Insulation began in 2005 and has grown to be the largest insulator in central Illinois. The company, which has 10 employees, provides many services including attic, cellulose, and energy-efficient insulation as well as re-insulation. “It is quality work and fair pricing. We try to help our customers build better houses and save money on energy costs,” said Belmonte. “We have a very courteous crew of hard-working guys. There has been growth every year, and we look forward to continued growth.”

For those seeking a career in the

insulation industry, Belmonte recommends that one should be ready to work hard and treat customers right. “Always work like your boss is watching you,” he said. “Customers expect a high level of professionalism. You are expected to have the knowledge to solve their issues.”

Regarding customer service, Belmonte feels strongly that one should be honest in all dealings. He received solid advice like this from his father, whom he sees as his biggest influence. “My father was in the car business. I saw him work hard and take care of us as we grew up,” said Belmonte. “He cares about his family a lot.”

Belmonte’s greatest achievements include serving as a missionary in Houston for his first two years after graduating high school and, much later, fathering his five children. “They are good, honest and hardworking. They love people,” he said.

Thinking of the future, Belmonte is unsure of how the economy is going to progress. “That affects our work so much,” he said. “Can we afford to keep government running the way it does for our kids’ futures?” Grandchildren are also a future hope for Belmonte, as is growing Prairie Insulation’s business and continuing to service his customers. Most importantly he wants to spend as much time with his family as he can.

In the immediate future, though, Belmonte is taking the whole family to Florida for spring break. As far as retirement goes, he

does intend to retire but likely will not stop working. “If I stop working I will probably drive myself and my wife crazy,” he said. “In my early 60s I may take on a diminished role. I really enjoy working with our customers and homebuilders. I will not necessarily have to retire from that.” □

Contact Eric Woods at ericw93@aol.com.

Fiore Belmonte

Title: General Manager, Prairie Insulation
Telephone: 217-787-9388
E-mail: fbelmonte@prairieinsulation.com

Born: Jan. 2, 1970
Location: Chicago
Education: Certified Energy Rater and Building Analyst
Family: Wife - Christine; Children - Brooke, Brytanny, Brenna, Fiore and Lexa

Favorites:
Hobby: Working with the Boy Scouts
Sports team: Chicago Bears
Band: Boston

Tidbits:
Loves all Star Wars movies
Speaks fluent Spanish
Wants to take a road trip to the U.S./Mexican border

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The bigger they are?

By Bridget Ingebrigtsen

The story of David and Goliath is among the best-known underdog stories. A tiny shepherd boy takes on a giant warrior – and the shepherd boy wins. It's a story that illustrates that if you put your mind to it, you can overcome any challenge that comes your way.

But as Malcolm Gladwell points out in his new book, *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*, the story of David and Goliath is not an underdog story at all. Because of the common belief that bigger is better, it is natural to assume that David is the underdog and that Goliath has the upper hand. However, if you examine the situation a little closer, you'll see that's not the case at all.

David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants
Hardcover - \$15.95 (305 pages)
Little, Brown and Company
(Oct. 1, 2013)

In actuality, Goliath was the underdog; he was too big, too slow and worst of all, overconfident. David, on the other hand, came to the battle with courage and faith, and his skills as a "slinger" enabled him to knock Goliath to the ground by a single shot and win the battle.

"Giants are not who we think they are," Gladwell writes. "The same qualities that appear to give them strength are often the sources of great weakness."

Gladwell goes on to cite dozens of examples that prove the point that a perceived disadvantage can often turn into an advantage. It's been shown time and time again that first-generation millionaires tend to be people who come from poverty, and it's their "hunger" for success that enables them to achieve it.

In addition, many first-time millionaires have also been found to have learning disabilities. A study by City University London showed that about one-third of entrepreneurs are dyslexic. Apparently, the skills they developed to compensate for their disabilities can enable them to succeed in business.

Likewise, an advantage can turn into a disadvantage. For instance, the same first-generation millionaires who turned disadvantage into advantage can create the opposite scenario for their own children by giving them limitless opportunities and privileges. As a result, these children don't often achieve the same level of success as their parents, and often struggle to find their way in the world.

The book also touches on why the "best" approach isn't always the best approach. For instance, a police department that was concerned about juvenile delinquency decided to use a rather unconventional method to fighting crime. Instead of just enforcing the law, the officers started to show they cared for the juveniles. The officers brought turkeys to the homes of troubled teens, and simply said, "We care about you." As a result, crime started to drop in that community.

While the book is filled with interesting points, I found myself stopping a few times during the book thinking, "Interesting ... but what's the point? What can I take away from this that applies to my life?" By the end, I had my answer, actually a few answers.

- Our outlook can determine outcomes. Just because you are born into poverty, doesn't mean you can't be a millionaire. And on the flip side, just because you are born into wealth, doesn't mean you won't be living on the streets someday.
- We should take nothing for granted. Look at poor Goliath. He didn't worry a bit about the battle with David – and we know how that ended up.
- We should always be thinking of new ways – better ways – of doing things. The police department story is the perfect example of this. We shouldn't be afraid to question the "best" ways of doing things because there may be a better way.

While I don't think this is Gladwell's best book, I think it's worth reading. Whether you are a David or a Goliath, you will likely find insights that can be applied to your own life. □

Bridget Ingebrigtsen is Marketing and Communications Leader at Harold O'Shea Builders. She can be reached at 522-2826 or bridget@osheabuilders.com. For reviews of other leadership books, visit the company's business book blog at www.osheabookshelf.com.

The cost of public education

By Sarah Delano Pavlik

The debate has begun again over raising taxes for District 186. So, just how much money does District 186 have, how is it spent, and how does that compare to other school districts in Illinois, the United States and the world?

The fiscal year 2014 amended budget (available on the district's website) shows total revenue of \$189,789,087 and total expenses of \$202,359,381. The district has approximately 15,000 students, so cost per student is approximately \$13,500.

The district's revenues come primarily from three sources: property taxes, state funds and federal funds. Under the 2014 budget, approximately 50 percent of revenue came from property taxes, 27 percent from state funds, 13 percent from federal funds, 6 percent from other taxes, such as corporate replacement tax, and 4 percent from other sources.

On average, Illinois has the sixth highest property tax rate in the country at 1.73 percent of the value of a property annually. The highest state is New Jersey at 1.89 percent. The lowest is Louisiana at .18 percent. According to my 2012 tax bill, the rate for District 186 is 1.52 percent.

How do we compare to other states in other categories? Exact figures can be hard to find, but ballotpedia.org reports that the average teacher salary in District 186 is \$56,208 and the average administrator salary is \$99,563, with the state averages being \$61,402 and \$106,217, respectively. However, the *Washington Post* puts the average Illinois teacher salary at \$59,113, and teacherportal.com puts the average Illinois teacher salary at \$64,509. The *Washington Post* also reports that national averages range from \$39,580 in South Dakota to \$75,279 in New York, with Illinois being the 13th highest state.

Does more spending per student equate to better education? Not directly, according to the latest *Education Week* rankings. According to the report, Alaska spends \$17,554 per student, the second highest in the country, but has the sixth worst schools. Virginia spends \$9,573 per student, the 14th lowest in the country, and Colorado spends \$9,160 per student, the ninth lowest in the country, but they are tied for the 10th best schools.



Sharon Okada, The Sacramento Bee

Massachusetts has the best schools and spends \$13,127 per student, the 15th highest in the country.

How do we compare to other countries? According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (the "OECD"), the United States spends more per student each year than any other developed country. In 2010 the U.S. average was \$15,171. The average for all of the other nations in the report was \$9,313. According to the same report, U.S. teachers also receive above average pay. The average U.S. first-year high school teacher earns roughly \$38,000, compared to the international average of \$31,000, and the average U.S. high school teacher salary is \$53,000, compared to the international average of \$45,500. Yet the report ranked the United States as only 17th on the list of best countries for education. (Russia ranked 20th.)

The ratio of students to teachers in District 186 is approximately 14.5. Per the OECD, the international averages are approximately 21 for primary school and 23 for high school. The U.S. averages are approximately 20 for primary school and 23 for high school.

So, what is the answer to improving education in Illinois? More money? Better allocated money? Higher teacher salaries? Smaller classes? Focus in recent years has been on the last two categories, but new thinking is emerging, especially with respect to class size.

Well-known film director M. Night Shyamalan spent four years researching education in America resulting in his recently published book, *I Got Schooled: The Unlikely Story of How a Moonlighting Movie Maker Learned the Five Keys to Closing America's Education Gap*. Shyamalan comes from a family of doctors, so he decided to research education scientifically by gathering and analyzing data.

According to Shyamalan, the primary issue is poverty and how we treat schools in impoverished areas. "If America's scores [on the international PISA test] were limited to those from schools in districts in which the poverty rate was less than 10 percent – Finland's [ranked as the best in education] poverty rate is less than 4 percent – the United States would lead the world, and it wouldn't be close: 551 on the

latest PISA test, compared to Finland's 536, or South Korea's 539. In fact, if all you did was exclude the American schools that have student bodies that are more than three-quarters poor, U.S. schools would still score 513, just behind Australia, but ahead of the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Germany, Iceland . . . well, you get the picture."

After analyzing all of the data, he concludes that smaller class sizes are not the answer. Instead, his five keys are good teachers, active principals, small schools, giving students feedback and "elbowing out" the day with longer school days and longer school years. He says that "two-thirds of the education gap between white suburban students and minority students can be erased just by extending the amount of time spent in school each day." According to the National Center on Time and Learning, the average length of the American school year is 180 days and the average length of the school day is 6.7 hours. Compare that to the Chicago public school numbers of 170 days and 5.75 hours, and Mr. Shyamalan may be on to something. □

Sarah Delano Pavlik is an attorney from Springfield.



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Professional Women's Calendar of Events

You play a key role and we thank you for your contributions to our community.

Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL)
 Illinois Women in Leadership will hold its Annual New Member Reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 20th at the home of Theresa Boley, 119 Lost Tree, Springfield, IL.
 Please join us for our annual New Member Reception. This is a time to honor and recognize our new IWIL members and a great social gathering for all members.
 Free for members who have recently joined since July 2012. Guests and potential new members are welcome to attend. The cost for members is \$18. Non-members and walk-ins are \$23. Reservation forms are available at www.iwil.biz. Reservations with payment must be received by 5 p.m. Thursday, 13th of March via the website or by mailing the registration form and payment to: IWIL, P.O. Box, IL 62704

Women for Women
 Designed to promote philanthropic giving from women in our community and to create a permanent resource for grant making to local issues which affect women, Women for Women is an exciting initiative of the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. This is a unique opportunity to bring women together to truly make a difference in the local community; as well as to learn and have fun.
 Women for Women's basic goals: To promote philanthropic giving from women in our community, to create a permanent resource for grant making to local issues that affect women & families, to create camaraderie among women and to learn and have fun. For more information, e-mail us at reed@cfl.org or call us at 217-789-4431.

Women Entrepreneurs - Central Illinois (WE-CI)
 Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois will hold its monthly meeting on Wednesday, March 12 th, from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at Pasfield House, 525 south Pasfield, Springfield, Ill 62704.
 Program: The Resurrection of Pasfield House & WE-CI's annual membership drive. The costs for the meeting are; \$22 for members, prospective members' dinners will be complimentary, and \$30 for walk-ins. Reservations are non-refundable. Additional information is available by contacting Cherrill Lewis @ 217-622-0189. Please make your reservations at by 3-7-14 at reservations@we-ci.org. Our website can now take payments by credit card.
 Monthly meetings include guest speakers, workshops, and social functions. Fundraising events support scholarships for local women receiving advanced professional training. Guests may request a notice sent directly to them by contacting Maureen Williams: maureenwms32@yahoo.com

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To have your event added to the Women's Calendar of Events, Please fax your information to (217) 726-8300 or e-mail to info@springfieldbusinessjournal.com

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RESTAURANT REVIEW



Red Robin on Veterans Parkway in Springfield

Bob-bob-bobbin' along

Corporate atmosphere aside, Red Robin cooks up a mean burger

By Thomas C. Pavlik

Chain restaurants aren't my favorite, but I am a sucker for a good burger. So, as I'd heard good things about Red Robin, I was excited when asked to review it.

Located on Veterans just across the street from White Oaks Mall, Red Robin occupies an out building in White Oaks Plaza. While Red Robin strives for a kitschy feel, it feels a bit sterile and corporate. There's a fairly large lobby (likely convenient on a Friday night when I'm sure there's the typical wait for chain establishments on Restaurant Row) that serves to cordon off the bar area from the main dining areas.

My guests and I arrived on a bitterly

cold day just before noon to find Red Robin about two-thirds filled. Our fellow diners were a healthy mix of West Side workers and families who were obviously trying to deal with another District 186 snow day.

Red Robin's menu has quite a bit more to offer than just burgers. There's a healthy smattering of soups, salads, wraps and sandwiches and even chicken burgers. Most items were priced between about 9 and 11 dollars. Options that intrigued us included the chicken tortilla soup (\$3.99 cup, \$4.99 bowl), the Bruschetta Chicken Sandwich (\$10.49 - grilled chicken, topped with bruschetta salsa, pesto aioli, Provolone, balsamic cream served on ciabatta) and the



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PHOTO BY GINNY LEE

Whiskey River BBQ Chicken Salad (\$10.39 – BBQ sauce, fire roasted corn, black beans and avocado, cheddar, crispy tortilla strips and a chicken breast).

There's a separate, smaller, lunch menu that's probably more fitting for most lunch diners and which runs between \$6.99 and 10.49.

Significantly, most of Red Robin's offerings come with their "bottomless" steak fries – served in unlimited quantities and also in a bottomless small metal dish. For those worried about their health, there's always the fruit salad option.

My guests and I decided to go carnivore and explore Red Robin's entrée-level burger offerings. Having inquired if this was our first visit, our server politely gave us the run down. I can't abide an overcooked burger, so I was particularly interested to hear that we could order our burgers "pink" or "not pink" – basically medium or medium rare.

We selected the Smoke and Pepper Burger (\$13.49 – black angus beef, cheddar, black pepper bacon, homemade smoke and pepper ketchup and smoked sea salt on toasted ciabatta), the A-1 Peppercorn Burger (\$10.99 – smoked bacon, pepper jack cheese, A-1 peppercorn spread, tomatoes and crispy onion straws), and the Gourmet Cheeseburger (\$8.99 – pickle relish, tomatoes, mayo and choice of cheese).

Our server was friendly and efficient. Drinks were well monitored and we were kept informed on the status of our order. Time between ordering and our food

arriving was a bit on the slow side; we were pushing the acceptable limits for a standard weekday lunch. Most importantly, having stressed that I really, really, really preferred my burger pink, I was optimistic that she made a special notation. Hope springs eternal.

When our orders arrived I was dismayed that mine and my companion's burger, both ordered pink, both arrived close to well done. Quite inexplicably, my other companion's burger was ordered "no pink" yet came out a perfect medium rare. One of my guests commented that the same thing happened to her on a previous visit. Our server graciously offered to have the dishes re-done, but we collectively concluded that we didn't have enough time.

That serious defect aside, we were otherwise pleased with our selections. These were good burgers made from quality ingredients and packed with flavor. The Smoke and Pepper burger earned rave reviews while the Gourmet Cheeseburger satisfied my particularly picky guest. The A-1 Burger, although a bit messy to eat, was a nice departure from your standard burger.

Not to beat a dead horse, but Red Robin could have sealed the deal if they had delivered on their promise of a cooked to order burger. If they can figure out how to deliver burgers as ordered, Red Robin could be at the high end of Springfield's burger pecking order. □

Thomas C. Pavlik, Jr. is an attorney from Springfield.

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Why Illinois is a great state

By Douglas L. Whitley

For years Illinois citizens, especially business owners and managers, have suffered embarrassment over political corruption, higher taxes and fees, chagrin over failed government fiscal policies, frustration with anti-business rhetoric and public employee discontent.

Employers have suffered anti-business initiatives by our own elected officials, while governors from other states routinely launch business-poaching parties to entice our highly desirable job creators to seek greener pastures.

Enough! Despite governmental and political headwinds, Illinois remains a great state that offers business owners and leaders many advantages that should not be overlooked or dismissed.

Illinois has the key components for business success. There is an abundance of land, fresh water, highly educated and trained workers, competitively priced energy, state of the art data capability and extensive transportation networks to move people, raw material, goods and services. Population density assures a substantial labor pool. A higher than average personal income for Illinois residents and the appeal of an attractive destination city for visitors guarantees a robust and extensive consumer market. Illinois is home to quality educational and health care facilities, as well as renowned research institutions and national laboratories.

Chicago is a world-class city with the ethnic diversity and global connections to cultivate and propel international business growth. Illinois' second urban area, comprised of the "metro-east" communities of southwestern Illinois, accounts for much of the industrial output of the St. Louis region. Metro-east helps anchor the state's position as a transportation center and a gateway to the west.

NATURAL BENEFITS

Illinois is blessed with the most productive farmland in the world. It is the foundation upon which agribusiness industries rely. Food processing, farm supplies, grain handling, global markets and advances in bio and machine technology are derived from ever-improving productivity on Illinois farms. If your business is connected to

agriculture, Illinois is the place to be.

Illinois sits above vast reserves of high-BTU coal deposits. There are more BTUs under Illinois than under the Saudi desert and Kuwait combined. Most Illinois coal production is currently being shipped to international markets. Thanks to a new hydraulic fracking law, Illinois oil and gas production is poised for a resurgence that could greatly improve opportunity and economic fortunes in southern Illinois.

Unlike much of the eastern United States, Illinois still offers an abundance of land in both urban and rural settings that is readily available for development. And, unlike many of the western states, Illinois has an abundance of fresh water resources.

Illinois hosts large population centers in the heartland of the nation and provides access to suppliers, industrial markets and raw materials. Illinois' central location facilitates one-day business travel schedules and offers a convenient location to gather for meetings and conventions.

The expanse of Shawnee National Forest that extends across the Illinois Ozarks is an overlooked and underutilized recreational wilderness that continually amazes visitors, as does the grandeur of Lake Michigan and the width and palisades of the Mississippi River that shapes the state's western border.

MAN-MADE BENEFITS

Transportation networks are one of the cornerstones of Illinois' economy. Illinois is known for transportation, logistics and warehousing. Our state contains the largest rail hub in the nation and is the only state served by all of the class-one railroads. Illinois holds 165 rail yards and 12 expansive, modern intermodal terminals. Currently, 25 percent of all U.S. rail traffic and 46 percent of all intermodal units in the U.S. touch the Chicago region. Illinois has the third largest interstate highway system in the country and is served by 15 interstate routes – more than any other state. Eight interstate highways converge on the Chicago region while four major east-west arteries converge at St. Louis.

Chicago's O'Hare airport hosts the nation's two largest airlines, but also accommodates 40 other airlines. O'Hare

airport handles direct flights to 255 cities, nearly half of which are international destinations. Chicago's Midway airport handles direct flights to 140 U.S. cities and 57 international locations.

The nation's oil, gas, chemical and fiber optic networks converge in Illinois. Chicago's Union Station is the hub for AMTRAK nationwide passenger rail service.

Illinois is well equipped to move people, physical products and electronic commerce.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Illinois is the fourth most productive manufacturing state. Such a large state, both from a geographic and a population perspective, means that Illinois commerce is highly diversified. No single economic segment totally dominates the economy. Such diversity means the state boasts pace setters and industry leaders in practically every business category.

Illinois companies are global leaders in advertising, agriculture, aviation, business services, consumer products, commodity-options-futures-derivatives trading, communications, construction, energy, entertainment, financial services, food products, food service, health care, hospitality, insurance, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, publishing, retail, technology and water treatment to name a few.

The overall economic output of Illinois' biotechnology industry is more than \$98.6 billion with 81,000 direct jobs and more than 3,500 biotechnology companies in the state. The biotechnology industry in Illinois has demonstrated the strongest revenue growth in recent years (averaging 13.3 percent) among all of the states analyzed according to a recent iBio report.

The University of Illinois research facilities are among the best in the world. The university secured more than \$1 billion in competitively awarded federal research grants last year and now ranks sixth among universities nationwide.

Conventions and tourism attracts an increasing number of visitors to Illinois. In 2013, Illinois hosted more than 2 million international visitors.

The state's major tourist attractions include world-renowned museums, Navy Pier, Willis Tower, Wrigley Field, the riverboat architecture tour and Millennium Park in Chicago. Natural beauty is celebrated along the Great River Road, the Illinois River Valley, the Shawnee National Forest, the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge and Lake Michigan's shoreline. Premiere historic sites include Cahokia Mounds – a United Nations designated world heritage site – in Collinsville, Lewis and Clark State Historic Site also near St. Louis and the numerous Abraham Lincoln sites in central Illinois, including the Presidential Museum and Library. Twentieth century progress, mobility and America's fascination with motorized vehicles is commemorated by thousands of intrepid travelers who pursue the historic Mother Road Route 66 that traverses the state.

Illinois is 390 miles long. The northern border lies parallel to Boston, Mass., and extends south to a point far below the historic Mason Dixon Line, even below Richmond, Va. Cairo, Ill., is two hours driving time closer to Memphis than it is to Chicago. Thus, southern Illinois' proximity to servicing industrial facilities in the Deep South is comparable to Chicago's access to the upper Midwest.

CONCLUSION

Illinois has been blessed with many strengths and assets to capitalize upon. As a result, Illinois business continues to do well despite years of political scandal, poor management of governmental finances, dysfunctional government and frequent missteps that challenge employers' sensibilities. Many elected officials simply fail to recognize there are real economic consequences to political decisions, regulatory indecisions, inefficiencies and delays.

Even what they say and how they say it gets the attention of investors and business owners looking for clues that Illinois is a stable, predictable, progressive and supportive business environment. □

Douglas L. Whitley is president and CEO of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce.

Do I really need a Realtor?

By Michelle Higginbotham, associate publisher

Having worked as a commercial Realtor for eight years until coming back to the *Business Journal* last month, I can attest to the fact that there are more resources available to property owners than ever. At one time a For Sale By Owner listing meant sticking a sign in front of your property and waiting for the phone to ring. Now you can build your own website, use social media, even post a Quick Response code for potential buyers to scan and access information about the property. There are popular websites intended to help owners determine the value of their property and many of them will also help you market it.

Yet 88 percent of home sales last year involved a real estate agent or broker, a number that has steadily increased over the past decade.* While technology has made it easier for those who want to do it on their

own, the vast majority of property owners still prefer to have a professional do it for them. This is probably for the same reason that while we might be allowed to file our own legal documents and represent ourselves in court, most of us would want an attorney to walk us through that process and answer our questions along the way. The IRS allows you to file your own taxes, but most people find that idea rather overwhelming. Having a good real estate agent, particularly a Realtor, can make things much easier when confronted with major life decisions. Realtors are real estate professionals who are members of the National Association of Realtors and subscribe to its strict Code of Ethics.

At the end of the day, real estate is about relationships, not commodities. While there is a tangible product being bought and sold,

it is also an emotional decision. For most people, the purchase of a home or business represents the largest financial investment they will ever make. The decision about which property to purchase will impact everything from where their kids attend school to whether the business can attract enough customers to keep the doors open.

Finally, access to data is not the same as being able to interpret data. It's easy to get on a few websites and generate statistics or information on previous sales. A Realtor can put that information in the context of the overall market activity and help you understand what it means for your specific property. And while some sales are generated by people who ran across your listing in a database, it is usually a result of your Realtor's relationships, either with potential buyers

or other Realtors. Networking is the key to making people aware of a particular property.

There's no magic formula that says if you follow these steps, your property will sell for x amount in a certain number of days. Real estate is an art, not a science. Being able to create your own marketing flyer or fill out paperwork doesn't equate to being able to sell your own property. A good Realtor will not only bring technical skills but will serve as a resource and advocate throughout the process. You could make a major life decision without any help, but why would you? □

*National Association of Realtors 2013 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers (<http://www.realtor.org/reports/highlights-from-the-2013-profile-of-home-buyers-and-sellers>)

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The state of downtown

By Mayor J. Michael Houston

Mayor Houston delivered this speech Jan. 22 at the annual Downtown Springfield, Inc., banquet and the Springfield Hilton. It is edited and abridged for the Springfield Business Journal.

While the city can boast of many different areas and neighborhoods, there are few as important as our downtown. Today it remains, as it has been historically, the focal point, the property tax base, and the employment base of our community. It is the heart of Springfield. What is taking place right now will resonate across this great American city.

I'll begin with these three words to describe the shape of downtown: emergent, vivacious and promise. Our downtown... although it isn't there yet... is poised to explode with emerging business and tourism growth for these reasons:

Much that is old is once again new.

The renovation of the **Prairie Capital Convention Center** will attract new business, help retain existing customers and generate new sales and marketing opportunities for groups and associations. Our city's Convention and Visitors Bureau markets the Convention Center as a part of its sales efforts to bring people to Mr. Lincoln's Hometown and to spend nights in our hotels and motels.

The **Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum** is a cornerstone in our downtown — always bringing in new and exciting exhibits. Last week we saw the launch of "Lincoln: History to Hollywood" exhibit at the Union Station where visitors and residents alike will be able to view how just one Lincoln story was brought to the big screen. This fascinating exhibit presents an opportunity to inspire both first-time and returning visitors to come to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

To make downtown vivacious we need an environment that is safe and sparkling.

I am sure you have noticed that **Springfield Green** is still going strong. The familiar presence of the downtown planters can still surprise us with new designs and plants leading to some of the best downtown "sparkle" in years. I want to give a special thank you to Abby Walden who oversees the Springfield Green program for the Public Works Department.

On the economic front, the future is promising and tremendously bright.

Barker Development Corporation has completed the exterior and interior rehabilitation to the **Motor Inn at Fourth and Monroe Streets** and is currently renovating the Old Sears building on the 600 block of East Adams. Anyone who has gone by Fourth and Monroe immediately notices the improvements which were funded in part by Tax Increment Fund financing of \$860,000.

The Ferguson Building at Sixth and Monroe has been transformed. Thank you to Rick and Kim Lawrence. It has had an extensive cleanup and removal of the exterior window grids. The Booth Building has completed the removal of what is referred to as the "slip cover" from the building. We are hopeful that the restoration will result in a designation so the Booth



Mayor Houston

PHOTO BY GINNY LEE

Building is included as part of Springfield's Downtown Historic District. While both the renovation of the **Booth and Ferguson buildings** are still in their infancy, these updates have already provided a major improvement to the appearance of the area.

The **Prairie Capital Convention Center** is putting the finishing touches on a \$15 million facelift and improvement plan that will make the facility more appealing and more alluring for future conventions and visitors. It will be more user friendly and functional for everyone. I want to congratulate the Springfield Metropolitan Exposition and Auditorium Authority on this project and the city is pleased and proud to be a significant partner in this effort by means of \$5 million of assistance from Tax Increment Financing funds.

Last year at this event I announced that the **Kidzeum** was going to locate in the old Schnepf & Barnes building on the 400 block of East Adams. The city is pleased to partner with the Kidzeum to assist in rehabilitation and building improvements by way of \$888,000 of Tax Increment Financing funds. The Kidzeum board is well on its way to reaching its fundraising goal and seems to announce major new donations on a weekly basis.

The city is close to completing the purchase of the entire **square block bounded by Fourth and Fifth Streets, and Jackson and Capitol**. The state completed its property disposition process and agreed to sell its portion of the block for just over \$1.5 million. Efforts to secure the remaining portion of the block are close to final and the city hopes to complete the transactions in the first quarter of 2014. Once the city has obtained the property, an initiative will be launched for proposals to redevelop the property.

The central business area continues to experience dramatic investment from the health care and medical industries. Between **St. John's Hospital, Memorial Medical Center, Springfield Clinic and Southern Illinois University School of Medicine**, Springfield is witnessing improvements totaling more than \$350 million to the respective physical plants of these vital employers.

Thanks to the efforts of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce and the **Mayor's SDAT Action Committee**, a national research firm was brought in to study the downtown housing market and confirm with facts that there is a demand

and potential to attract hundreds of new residents within five years. This matches the national trend of movement back to city dwelling and fits well with the availability of vacant office space and plans to improve the existing infrastructure of our inner city. A more pedestrian friendly, walkable, livable, vibrant downtown neighborhood will attract young professionals and help our economy grow with amenities to serve the needs of downtown residents.

The ribbon cutting on Sept. 4 officially marked the conclusion of a \$5 million overhaul and the opening of the newly renovated **President Abraham Lincoln Springfield, a Doubletree by Hilton Hotel**. That represents a significant entry into the national market of travelers, tourists and conventioners. It will serve to strengthen the city's position in attracting conventions to the recent \$15 million renovation of the neighboring Prairie Capital Convention Center.

In an effort to offset longer delays at **Third Street railroad crossings** caused by freight trains which are longer and will be more frequent, safety features will be added to allow trains to increase travel speed from 25 to 40 mph through the city. These safety features will create a much-needed quiet zone which will enhance prospects for more residential development. At the same time, prospects that **Railroad Consolidation** will happen were supported by the announcement of the \$14.4 million TIGER Grant. In 2014 construction of the first of eight proposed new underpasses along the 10th street corridor will begin.

The city's desire to complete construction features of the 10th Street Rail Consolidation have been helped by the \$8.65 million grant from Governor Quinn and IDOT to cover half the cost of planning and design of the 10th Street Railroad Corridor. In addition, we will be receiving approximately \$5 million for closing at-grade railroad crossing from the Illinois Commerce Commission for the 10th and Carpenter underpass. Completion of this first underpass in 2015 will also provide immediate improvement for emergency vehicle access to medical facilities for those traveling from east to west on Carpenter Street.

Hopefully, this summary will confirm for you that right now, the shape of downtown Springfield has an abundance of promise, and is emergent and vivacious. □

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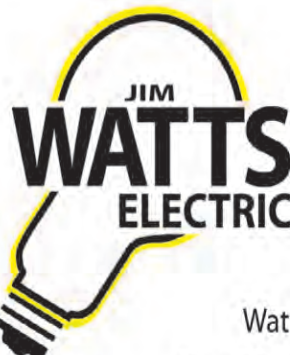


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