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July 2024

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United by tragedy

One of the best things about working for Springfield Business Journal is getting to be part of the four awards programs we hold each year, two recognizing businesses of various sizes and two honoring individuals. I am the one who calls the recipients to let them know they've been selected, and people are generally surprised and appreciative. The awards ceremonies are joyous occasions, with friends, family members and coworkers gathered to celebrate the achievement.

This issue of SBJ features profiles of the 2024 Forty Under 40, outstanding young professionals who have already given back to our community in a variety of ways. The selection committee was unanimous in also wanting to recognize Emma Shafer, whose untimely death two days before last year's Forty Under 40 ceremony devastated our community. You will find a special profile on Emma in the Forty Under 40 section (p. 8), and her mother, Cathy Schwartz, will serve as the keynote speaker for this year's event. Emma's family and friends continue to keep her memory alive by encouraging others to take action in support of the causes that Emma was passionate about – and there were many.

Another tragedy has recently befallen our community, a fire in the 400 block of East Adams Street. Numerous small businesses were affected by not just the fire itself, but smoke and water damage, power outages and now the cleanup efforts. Downtown Springfield, Inc. is administering a fund created at Illinois National Bank, "Benefit for Businesses Affected by Adams Family Fire," intended to assist those businesses with recovery efforts.

The one bright spot in the midst of these collective tragedies is seeing the community come together. I get weary from moderating online comments and social media posts for our various publications, because even announcements that would seem to be big wins for Springfield – the groundbreaking for the Scheels Sports Park, proposed expansion of the BOS Center, etc. – are often met with just as many negative remarks as positive ones. But when tragedy strikes, people seem more apt to rally together and respond with kindness and encouragement. Perhaps we can figure out a way to "bee like Emma" and make that our daily approach, rather than reserving it for special occasions.



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a
Q & A
with
Christina Shutt

By David Blanchette

Christina Shutt, 37, has served as the executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum since June 2021. Previously, Shutt was executive director for the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, the African American museum of history and culture for the state of Arkansas. Under her guidance, the center was awarded first-time national museum accreditation. Since joining the ALPLM, it has also received first-time national museum accreditation, a distinction only 3% of U.S. museums hold. She has also worked with legislators to transform the position of Illinois State Historian to focus on underrepresented history, launched community outreach efforts to make the institution more welcoming and inclusive, and hosted the signing ceremony to make Juneteenth an official state holiday in Illinois. Shutt holds a bachelor's degree in history from Central Methodist University in Fayette, Missouri, and two master's degrees in library science/archival management and history from Simmons University in Boston.

Where were you born and raised, and how has that impacted your life?

I was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, a place that is about family and community, and that has really impacted the way I think about museums. Museums should be a welcoming space to all people. I've really tried to do that here at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and throughout my career, making history and museums accessible and relevant to people's lives.

When and how did you decide on your career field?

My mom used to drag me to museums all the time but I use the word lightly because I loved to go; I was a total museum nerd growing up. When I was in college, I got the opportunity to go to the National Archives for the first time, and standing in the rotunda with the Charters of Freedom, seeing the Declaration of Independence for the first time, it struck me that I could have a career where my job was literally to protect our country's most valuable treasures for future generations.

It was also an opportunity to do that in a place where there aren't very many people who look like me. In fact, there is only one other Black woman in the whole country who has been in charge of a presidential library. It's been such a joy and opportunity to create new pathways for others as I blaze trails for myself.

How did you become interested in Abraham Lincoln?

Lincoln was someone who was always learning. When he didn't know something, he picked up a book and learned about it. That's one of the things that continues to stand out and amaze me because it encourages and reminds me that's the kind of leader I need to be, someone



ALPLM executive director Christina Shutt speaks to a group of ALPLM supporters in the library's Lincoln Reception Room, with historic Union Station in the background. PHOTO COURTESY ALPLM.



ALPLM executive director Christina Shutt welcomes guests to an event at the museum's Union Theater. PHOTO COURTESY ALPLM.

who is always learning.

What surprised you the most after you took over as head of the ALPLM?

I was surprised at just how dedicated our volunteers are. We have volunteers who actually fly here from places like North Carolina or drive from Omaha just to volunteer at the ALPLM. I have never worked in a museum where you see that kind of dedication. It's really cool to come to work every day and be a part of that team.

What professional difficulties have you faced by being a woman of color?

I am often the only woman sitting at the table, and I am almost always the only woman of color in the room. I've really had to focus on the challenges of people maybe not taking me seriously, and the idea of how can I bring my whole and full self into the room? How can I represent voices that are often not at the table and make sure those voices are heard?

I'm the mom of young children and remember what it was like going to museums and having to nurse your child somewhere and how difficult it was. I wanted this museum to be different, so we worked with a donor and created a nursing room here at the museum. We've actually heard from a number of women who come here to do research about how helpful that is to them.

What was the inspiration for your Abe for All initiative to reach out to under-represented populations?

I've always been passionate about museums being for all people. When I grew up, I didn't see myself in museums. I didn't see myself reflected in the exhibits or in the volunteers or

staff. So part of this initiative is helping people to understand that we see you, we value you, you belong in this museum and your story matters. I'm so excited for all the opportunities that we've had to engage with different communities, whether it's the deaf community or people on the autism spectrum. It's really opened a lot of doors to hopefully change people's perceptions about museums and help them realize that museums are for them, too.

What parts of Lincoln's legacy still resonate for us today?

We are still engaged with the challenges of democracy and the importance of citizenship and its responsibilities. That was something that Lincoln dealt with, what a new birth of freedom might look like for millions of enslaved Americans. We are still talking about the role of the news media, something Lincoln also dealt with.

What advice would you give to young people who are entering your career field?

Always be someone who is willing to learn and grow from everything. I learn from people all of the time about how I can be a better leader, how I can be a better me and how I can make a difference in people's lives.

What might people be surprised to learn about you?

When I was a kid my original dream job was to be an ice cream taster. I thought it would be really fun to be someone who got to taste ice cream for a living. Little did I know that is an actual job. But history is just as fun, and occasionally we do get ice cream here.

FORTY UNDER 40 2024

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Emma Shafer

April 13, 1999 – July 11, 2023

Occupation: community organizer

Education: Associate degree in political science from Lincoln Land Community College and bachelor's degree in urban studies from the New School in New York City.

Family: Parents Cathy Schwartz and John Shafer; sisters Shelley Brown and Katie deMarco; nieces and nephews, Carter, Leo and Henry deMarco, Ava and Emma Brown; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Affiliations/community activities: Membership chair of the Sierra Club Sangamon Valley Group, an incoming board member for the Springfield Immigrant Advocacy Network, a former organizer with Faith Coalition for the Common Good, founder and co-leader of Students Demand Action for Gun Sense and an active volunteer with countless other community groups. She received the Dynamic Youth Award from the Faith Coalition for the Common Good in 2018 as a 19-year-old college student.

What is your guiding principle in life?

Emma was guided by a multitude of principles throughout her life. She was guided by her desire to learn, to grow, to understand communities and life circumstances, and to fight for a more equitable world. But what rose paramount amongst her numerous principles was her commitment to the betterment of all. Emma remained committed to finding actionable changes for inequitable and unfair realities. Whether it was fighting the CO2 pipeline, incorporating bike lanes throughout Springfield, finding better public transit, or advocating for cleaner water and affordable housing, she was equally and fully committed to creating the world she envisioned. She imagined a world where worry was present, but not dominant, a world where individuals could focus on their families and one another rather than constantly worrying about factors many individuals do not have to consider.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield?

Emma had innumerable hopes for Springfield and believed in Springfield's ability to be an incredible small-sized city. I believe her greatest hope – beyond food co-ops, solid public transit, affordable housing downtown, bike lanes and walkability, the elimination of unnecessary parking garages, creating awareness of redlining and historic discrimination or eliminating citywide discrimination – would be for the entire Springfield community to care enough to ensure the longevity of these endeavors.

So many in this city have accepted a reality that does not have to be our reality. Westward expansion only damages the hope and beauty Emma saw for Springfield in the future. If we – all Springfieldians – make conscious efforts to invest in and be a part of creating a more equitable, walkable and community-oriented city, the possibilities could be limitless. Emma had hopes far more specific than everything I have listed, but if we start to pay attention to those outside of our insular communities, to our downtown, to a positive environmental infrastructure, we can certainly achieve at least half of what Emma dreamed for our community.

What would you like to give back to your community?

The greatest thing Emma gave to her community was herself. Her passion and devotion to our community was far larger than any singular change she made and would have made in the future. Emma gave herself completely to the city of Springfield and in return, she radically changed lives and communities, while implementing actions to better life for all.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path?

Emma faced immense pushback in many of the dreams she had for Springfield. Instead of succumbing to the constant "no" from individuals or institutions, she pushed on. Emma protested bravely, spoke confidently with conviction and overcame incredible obstacles.

The *Springfield Business Journal* proudly features **40 leaders** who are **under the age of 40** in the Springfield and neighboring business communities. These individuals are selected based on their contributions to our local business community and the community in which they reside. They represent, in part, the future of business in our community and in central Illinois.

The selectees' career paths, educational background, and community affiliations are varied. They represent **the best** and **brightest** from a wide range of occupations. You can expect to hear more from and about these leaders in the years ahead. The program is able to continue due to the commitment of local businesses that realize the importance of acknowledging these up and coming business leaders and supporting community business programs.

Visit springfieldbusinessjournal.com to view selectees from previous years.

A note from the selection committee:

It's been nearly a year since our community lost Emma Shafer, a bright light in this world extinguished much too soon. Just 24 years old, she had already made more of an impact on Springfield than some people do in a lifetime. Her parents, John Shafer and Cathy Schwartz, are both previous recipients of Forty Under 40 and Emma almost certainly would have gone on to be recognized with this distinction as well. The selection committee asked her family for permission to honor her posthumously with this year's class of Forty Under 40. Her close friend Iman Kamel helped with the responses to the questionnaire.



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WOMEN'S EVENT CALENDAR

Join Illinois Women in Leadership on Thursday, July 18, at Erin's Pavilion for the ATHENA Leadership Award. Cocktail hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 6:30 and the award presentation at 7 p.m.

This year's nominees are: June Wood Agamah, Kayla Edwards, Marnie Fauser, Tess Fyalka, Betsy Goulet, Carol Harms, Susan Hingle, Julie Krehbiel, Victoria Nichols and Deb Sarsany. The ATHENA Leadership Award is presented to an individual who is honored for professional excellence, community service and for actively assisting women in their attainment of professional excellence and leadership skills.

Tickets are \$100 per person through Friday, July 5, or \$115 per person after that date. The RSVP deadline is July 11. Make reservations online at iwil.biz.

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MARVIN MERRIWEATHER 37

Occupation: Licensed clinical social worker/Level-2 Crossfit coach

Email: mmmerriweather@BestrongMH.com

Education: Bachelor's degree in social work, Tuskegee University; Master's degree in social work, University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana

Family: Wife, Joli; parents, Doris and Marvin Merriweather Sr.; three siblings

Affiliations/community activities: Owner of Be Strong Mental Health and Therapeutic Services, Head Coach at Railsplitter Fitness, Chatham Area Chamber of Commerce, Springfield Urban League provider, clinical support with Hope Springs, presenter at Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Abuse and District 186, Ball Chatham School District.

What is your guiding principle in life? I have been guided by the principle expressed by Booker T. Washington in his quote, "Success is not measured so much by the position one has reached in life, but by the obstacles one has overcome while trying to succeed." It is inevitable that we will face obstacles in our lives, but these challenges present valuable opportunities for learning and personal growth.

What led you to your current career? My older brother Michael's experiences with the mental health system pushed me toward my current career path. Witnessing how he was treated ignited a desire within me to create a therapeutic environment where clients feel understood, valued and safe throughout their healing journey.

What would you like to give back to your community? I hope to raise awareness about the emotional trauma we have experienced and demonstrate the possibility of healing from these profound emotional wounds.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish I had known the value of close, meaningful relationships. In the pursuit of success, it's easy to get caught up in individual achievements and neglect the power of human connection. I have come to learn that strong relationships are not only essential for personal well-being but also have a significant impact on professional growth and success. Having close friends, family, and mentors who support, encourage and challenge me has been invaluable. They have provided me with a sense of belonging, purpose and motivation.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My greatest professional achievement to date has been the successful completion of my Clinical Mentoring Program with the Springfield Urban League.

What's the song you sing in the shower? Anything by J.Cole is my go to artist but right now my go to shower song is "Take Off" by Wacotron. it's a good song to get motivated for the day.

ELIZABETH KNOEDLER 38

Occupation: Dentist at Prairie Dental Group

Email: DrLizKnoedler@gmail.com

Education: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, SIU School of Dental Medicine.

Family: Parents, Brad and Krista Steller; husband, Joe Knoedler, children Brice and Camille.

Affiliations/community activities: Board member of G.V. Black District Dental Society; past president, board member of Bundles of Joy; previous board member of Springfield Ballet Company; American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine; International College of Dentists; American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I would like to be leading Prairie Dental Group/Prairie Sleep Center and to also be a super-involved mom at my kids' sporting events.

What is your guiding principle in life? I got it from a Peloton instructor but it really resonates with me: "How you do anything is how you do everything." Meaning in all aspects of my work and life, I give it my all.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I did not realize until recently how the women in my life have made such an impact on who I am. Growing up with a working mom and being a part of the all-female Prairie Dental Group is so empowering.

What led you to your current career? I always had a science and math brain and I always played instruments and danced ballet so I had the artistic side as well. Mixing the medical and artistic worlds led me to dental school.

What would you like to give back to your community? Growing up here I always felt safe, I had a great education, I was supported by my teachers and neighbors, and I was welcomed when I came back to Springfield to have my career. Being a dental provider is so much more than just fixing teeth. I love being in this community that raised me and being able to help our patients feel confident and healthy.

Worst career advice: "Keep your head down and hustle." Being part of a bustling office can create a lot of moving parts but I enjoy seeing the small moments between our team and our patients, watching team members help each other, and seeing the patients change and feel comfortable.



COLIN LISS 35

Occupation: General manager of Green Lincoln, General manager of Green Mazda, co-owner of Liss Holdings Inc.

Email: colin.liss@greenstores.net

Education: Rochester High School

Family: Wife: Breanne; children Gentry and Arlow; parents, Kenneth and Susan Liss.

What led you to your current career? I was unsure and moving without direction in my college studies. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I always loved cars and enjoyed talking to and interacting with people. In 2008 I went to Green Mazda with my mother for her new vehicle purchase – by the end I was offered a sales job. My parents were not thrilled, but I took it. I am thankful for my path every day.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I feel it instinctual to say growth, but I think quality over quantity is my greatest hope. Springfield is an awesome place to raise a family. I think this place we call home can improve and be better before we need to worry about being bigger. I understand the importance of growth – but we already have a lot right here in front of us that can use more support and improvement.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Sometimes good people don't have the best day, and learning not to take things personally was a big thing for me. Understanding that every person digests things differently. Your experience with people can be so dependent on when you cross paths, under which circumstances, etc. I think when dealing with high volumes of people it's important to communicate in their way. A genuine desire to be helpful and serve goes a long way.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? No matter what you do there is no magic bullet. A great mentor told me this many times. I would always ask questions such as "What would you do?" and "How would you do this?" That's how we learn. But at the end of the day there is no magic bullet. Even the smartest of people at times don't know the right answer, they just consider all variables to make the best decision – and make it. Don't overthink things. You're in your position for a reason. Consider, calculate, decide and move on.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Without a doubt becoming a general manager of the dealership in 2019.

What's the WORST career advice you've ever received? "Don't ever teach people what you know, it will make you less valuable." If people did this they would never learn, cross-train or take on challenges. Open information and allowing others to know your job isn't a threat to you. If every person at a business could do every job can you imagine the insulation, efficiency and success that team would have?

Allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all of the Springfield Business Journal's Forty Under 40 recipients for 2024.

Thank you for the leadership and contributions you have provided for our community.

I look forward to hearing about many more of your future successes.



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EMILY LYNCH 35

Occupation: Marketing consultant/ABC NewsChannel20-FOX Illinois.

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Education: Bachelor's degree, business administration, University of Illinois Springfield.

Family: Husband, Bill, sons, Carson and Oliver, and three stepsons.

Affiliations/community activities: The Carillon Belles, president; Rees Carillon Society board member; volunteer coordinator at Lindsay Elementary PTO; member of Illinois Women in Leadership, The Networking Group, Central Illinois Customer Service Association and Kings Daughters Organization.

What led you to your current career? My love for my hometown ultimately led to my career. I was born in Springfield, graduated high school and college in Springfield, and wanted to stay in Springfield to have a career to be near my family. I've always been an avid TV watcher so when I saw the job posting 13 years ago, I knew I wanted to learn more. I've always liked connecting people. Connecting people with organizations and connecting people with other people. I get to do that all day, every day in my career!

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My greatest hope for Springfield is for it to become a hub of collaboration, where people from diverse backgrounds come together to solve problems, innovate and create a better future for everyone.

What would you like to give back to your community? I'd like to give back by providing access to knowledge, promoting kindness and supporting initiatives that address local needs.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Obstacles vary widely in my profession, from facing rejection or setbacks with self-doubt or uncertainty. I've learned to be tenacious. That despite the challenges, stay focused on goals and adapt strategies when necessary to keep moving forward.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish my younger self knew the importance of patience, perseverance and adaptability.

What's the WORST career advice you've ever received? My Dad said don't take a 100% commission sales job. Still here after 13 years and through those years, I've learned that what I do is more than a sales job. It involves building relationships, understanding market trends, crafting effective strategies and contributing to the success of my clients.

DR. AIDA ADLIMOGHADDAM 38

Occupation: Assistant professor in the Department of Neurology and cross-appointed to the Department of Pharmacology and Neuroscience, and Department of Molecular Biology, Microbiology and Biochemistry.

Organization: Southern Illinois University, School of Medicine

Email: aadlimoghaddam72@siu.edu

Education: PhD and postdoctoral training at the University of Manitoba, and St. Boniface Hospital Research, respectively (Canada)

Family: My family is distributed across North America and other parts of the world. In Springfield, I live with my husband, Kyle.

Affiliations/community activities: American Alzheimer's Association, Society for Neuroscience, The Society of Clinical Research Associates, Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation, The Alzheimer's Association International Society to Advance Alzheimer's Research and Treatment. Volunteer with the Behavioral Health Workforce Center in Springfield.

What is your guiding principle in life? I believe in treating others with kindness and respect, and I strive to make a positive impact on the world.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? Creating a safe and welcoming environment where everyone can thrive and feel proud to call home.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I aim to continue advancing in my academic career, perhaps taking on leadership roles within my department or university. I aspire to be recognized internationally for my contributions to research and education, while also maintaining a fulfilling work-life balance and making meaningful connections within my academic community.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Earning my doctorate stands as my greatest professional achievement, reflecting years of dedication and hard work.

What would you like to give back to your community? I would like to give back to my community by actively engaging in initiatives that promote education, health care access and economic opportunities for all.

Who was your childhood/teenage celebrity crush? Enrique Iglesias



VALERIA CUETO 37

Occupation: Vice president, equity, diversity and inclusion

Email: cueto.valeria@mhsil.com

Education: Bachelor of arts, Williams College; Master of arts, McKendree University

Family: Husband, Juan Pava, and daughters, Elena and Lucia.

Affiliations/community activities: Springfield Immigrant Advocacy Network, SHG Board of Directors, Heartland HOUSED

What is your guiding principle in life? My guiding principle is that we are better together and togetherness is achieved through deep commitment to community expressed through action.

What led you to your current career? I've always been drawn to journey with people seeking safety, security and happiness. My career in what has become known as "DEI" started 20 years ago when I was volunteering to serve Guatemalan migrants in Florida. It evolved when I moved to Springfield in 2011 and began working with the Dominican Sisters of Springfield and then shifted in 2020 when much of the nation turned its attention to racial inequities. The undercurrent of my work has always been a commitment and sense of obligation to community.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My greatest hope for Springfield is for it to continue to develop as a community in which people feel confident that it is the right place to put down roots – to start businesses, grow families, age and generally be an active part of a vibrant and conscientious community that is welcoming and inclusive.

What would you like to give back to your community? Simply put, what I want to give back to my community is love and care. The way I have found to "love" it is through my work at Memorial, volunteering, civic engagement and raising a family that cares about the community it lives in.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Find friends and mentors professionally and personally – specifically people who challenge you to be a better version of yourself. Relationships matter. Nurture them in genuine ways. Accept feedback – it is a gift.

Who was your childhood/teenage celebrity crush? Can I just tell you that my current crush is Regé-Jean Page from the first season of Bridgerton? My husband knows and he understands.



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NEPHROLOGY

AARON HOUSE

28

Occupation: IT consultant, president/owner, CCS Inc.

Email: aaron@completecomputersolutions

Education: Bachelor's degree, cloud and systems administration

Family: Wife, Amanda, and daughter, Evelyn.

Affiliations/community activities: Member of The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Springfield, Inc., Sangamon CEO graduate and board member

What is your guiding principle in life? Effective and honest communication are both essential for building strong relationships personally and professionally.

What would you like to give back to your community? The guidance and support I received from experienced business professionals in the community was instrumental to my success. I'm eager to pay it forward by offering that same level of mentorship and support to the next generation of local entrepreneurs and business leaders.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Starting my IT career at a young age, I faced the challenge of proving my knowledge and expertise despite my age. I found the best way to overcome this obstacle was by consistently exceeding expectations, seeking out challenging projects and embracing continuous learning.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Stick to your values. Don't be afraid to turn down or cut loose business and professional relationships with those who do not align with your values.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? My wife had a major surgery this year that had a lengthy recovery time. I learned the importance of having a strong network of friends and family who will support you at your highs and lows, that can mean the difference between staying afloat or sinking. My family stepped up and provided invaluable assistance with meals, child care, and emotional support, allowing me to focus on caring for my wife during her recovery. This experience deepened my appreciation for the strength and support that comes from family and community.

What app on your phone are you ashamed to say you use? Temu



COLTIN CUNNINGHAM

37

Occupation: Director of operations, Henson Robinson Company

Email: CCunningham@Henson-Robinson.com

Education: Bachelor's degree, Robert Morris University; master's degree, University of Illinois

Family: Wife, Megan, and children Tripp, Cami and Cooper.

Affiliations/Community Activities: Youth volunteer martial arts instructor; Boys & Girls Club of Central Illinois board of directors; Local First Springfield vice president; West Side Christian Church; Mechanical Contractors Association of America.

Guiding principle in life? Do what is right, and stand for what is right, no matter how hard it is!

What led to your current career? When I was young, I believed college was the only smart path after high school. In college, I discovered a passion for business and economics. I was fortunate to get an opportunity to help manage a local mechanical contractor, which opened my eyes to the "trades" world. I quickly realized that some of the smartest people you'll ever meet wear blue collars, not white. I fell in love with the business of helping people build and fix things.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? If you treat people well and put your best effort into everything you do, you don't have to worry so much. I stressed over every little thing for too long. "Success" looks different for everybody, but if you're doing those two things quit worrying and just enjoy every day as much as you can.

What would you like your life to look like in 5-10 years? I am a very driven person, but I am blessed and have everything I'll ever need right now: An amazing wife, three awesome kids, great friends, and a career with an amazing company. My hope for the next 5-10 years would simply be to meet (and get to know) many more people in our community. One of my greatest professional joys is being helpful, providing answers and connecting people. The more people I know the more helpful I can be. A great network is great energy, and I want more of that in my life.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? I am proud of my role in helping a few companies achieve financial and reputational success over the past 15 years. However, I consider my greatest professional achievements to be the people I have hired, some against recommendation, that have gone on to be outstanding employees and people in general. Being a significant part of someone's happy life in a meaningful way is better than any other benchmark I can think of.

COREY KATES

39

Occupation: Assistant vice president, mortgage lender

Email: ckates@inb.com

Education: Bachelor of business administration, University of Illinois Springfield.

Family: Wife, Jamie, and son, Aiden.

Affiliations/community activities: Member of The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Chatham Chamber, Chatham Area Public Library Foundation Member, former co-chair of the Mike Steele Memorial Golf Tournament.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Becoming a certified veteran mortgage adviser to help spread awareness about VA loans while helping our military members and veterans obtain their dream of owning a home!

What led you to your current career? I had the pleasure of working at Systemax about 15 years ago selling marketing materials for banks and credit unions. My experience there led me to want to work within the banking profession. From there I worked at Wells Fargo helping ensure homeowners find solutions to keeping their homes during financial crises. At that point I knew I wanted to be in the chair to help clients in the initial homebuying process, and never turned back.

What is your guiding principle in life? Be humble, treat others how you would want to be treated, and no laying up on a par 5.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Not to be so critical of myself and know that growth only happens when you get out of your own way.

What would you like to give back to this community? The only thing that we leave behind when we pass is our last name to our children. I want to be able to have a positive impact on the people I come in contact with in my life, and for my son to be proud of carrying on my last name for how I was as a father and how I treated others.

What app on your phone are you ashamed to say that you use? I have an app called "Satellite Tracker" that tracks the International Space Station's current location and will send me a notification when it is visible at night to see it pass over.



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TIMOTHY COLLIER

35

Occupation: Springfield Police Department officer
Email: Colliertimothy89@gmail.com
Education: High school diploma, attended Langston University
Family: Wife, Talia; daughters Teegan and Taylor and expecting third daughter.
Affiliations/community activities: Diversity Adversity Committee of the Springfield Police Department, board member of Do it from the Heart nonprofit
What is your guiding principle in life? My guiding principle in life is to stay true to myself, never give up and to keep God first.
What led you to your current career? Helping people in the community is what led me to my career choice. I want to be the change as an African American on the police force. Changing the narrative for others that look like me to let them know there are positive influences in this role is a goal of mine.
What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? In five years I hope to be a sergeant for my department and in 10 years hopefully be a lieutenant.
What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish my younger self would have known that at the end of all the hard work, it will work out. All the sacrifices and tears are worth it.
What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My greatest professional achievement is when I did my first back to school event. With the help of family and friends I was able to give over 100 kids book bags and school supplies. This year I am aiming to help over 300 kids.
What's the song you sing in the shower? Kendrick Lamar's Not like Us



ZACHARY HEINEMAN

39

Occupation: SVP/Director of IT, United Community Bank
Email: zheineman@ucbbank.com
Education: Bachelor of applied science, Robert Morris College
Family: Spouse, Leah, and son, Chase.
Affiliations/community activities: Lincoln Land Community College Computer Science Advisory Committee.

What is your guiding principle in life? Offer help to others even if they may not seem to need it. Some may be too hesitant or proud to ask.
What led you to your current career? As a kid I was intrigued with computers and technology. Chatham's high school had a CCNA IT certification program that exposed me to challenging coursework. Later, Springfield's Robert Morris College had an amazing group of teachers. As an IT field service technician, I enhanced my technical skills, but it taught me more about customer service. Helping a stressed-out college student with a broken laptop or an anxious business owner with a server down really opened my eyes to the variety of environments and needs. Later, I started at United Community Bank. UCB's desire to put the best technology in customers' hands, superior customer service and aggressive growth aligned with my work ethic and set me on an amazing journey that continues.
What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish my younger self would have acted sooner on the advice and wisdom from others, especially my wonderful wife's. A better work-life balance, and more focus on learning the big picture of the business. Above all: Do less better!
What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Training and mentoring so many talented people.
Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? Seeing my son present a robot at the STEM fair and fixing issues with it on the fly immediately took me back to a college final exam where I was doing the same thing. It was a great moment of pride but also a moment of clarity regarding the influence we have on others and the legacy it can create.
What's the best purchase (under \$100) you've made in the last six months? Library card. It was free!



CHARLES LONG

37

Occupation: Deputy executive director and ReStore Manager.
Email: clong@habitatsangamon.com
Education: Some college
Family: Middle child out of three siblings.
Affiliations/Community activities: Member, Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, and board member, Springfield's Local First. I work with various rehabilitation and job placement agencies. I team up with volunteers from District 186, several colleges, United Way's Day of Action for businesses and other community outreach opportunities.
What is your greatest hope for Springfield? To see more ergonomic growth, better infrastructure, strategic planning and stronger community activities.
What would you like to give back to your community? More homes to be built. More foundation for youth engagement and training.
What led you to your current career? I wanted to be involved in something impactful that would help people. I certainly wanted to get out of corporate stores.
What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Have strong work ethic, having a vision, being determined, always saying yes: Yes to investments, training and promotions.
What do you wish your younger self knew when you started this path? I wish I'd known the various stages of involvement. Being able to see the end result would have saved me a lot of headaches.
What's the song you sing in the shower? Michael McDonald's I keep forgetting.



TRAVIS DAVIS

35

Occupation: CPA
Email: travisd@kebcpa.com
Education: Bachelor's degree, accounting and finance, Illinois College; Master's degree, accounting, UIS
Family: Wife, Laura; children, Wesley and Adaline
What is your guiding principle in life? There are several corny iterations of it, but, generally, just the idea of being where you are and controlling what you can control.
What would you like to give back to your community? One of the unique things about my job is the opportunity to get to know and work with several leaders in the community. Being able to work with them and help them complete their visions for the future of not only their businesses or organizations, but also the community itself, is a role and opportunity that I'm very grateful for.
What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Working in accounting is just a series of (seemingly never-ending) deadlines. I'm very fortunate to have a supportive family and co-workers that help to overcome the ebbs and flows of time commitments that go along with it.
What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? You don't know half of what you think you do.
What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Making partner this year.
What app on your phone are you ashamed to say you use? Facebook – but specifically Marketplace. I spend entirely too much time looking at the various "bargains" around.

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Manager, Regional Development & Government Relations

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AALIYAH KISSICK 23

Occupation: Miss Illinois United States, Owner at AK Boutique
Email: info@aaliyahkissick.com
Education: BS in agricultural and consumer economics with a focus in financial planning, UIUC; graduate student, master's of science in management, UIUC
Family: Husband, Jay; mother, Cheryl; grandmother, Julia.
Affiliations/community activities: Founder, The Financial Literacy Diaries; volunteer, The Financial Literacy Foundation; veteran, Illinois Army National Guard; Talent representation, Images Agency; and previously Student Trustee at Lincoln Land Community College (2019-2020).
Memberships: Illinois Women in Leadership, Women in Leadership Central Illinois, Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois, Central Illinois Film Commission, Get Your Flicks at Route 66 Committee, Financial Planning Association, Chemical Corps Regimental Association.
What is your guiding principle in life? Deep listening solves most problems.
What led you to your current career? After running a successful boutique at 17, I loved personal finance. The boutique is online as I focus on higher education and building expertise in financial planning.
What would you like to give back to your community? I have dedicated my time in 2024 to volunteering to make financial education more accessible through my statewide platform as Miss Illinois United States and by creating The Financial Literacy Diaries. I would love to see financial education accessible to all.
What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? To quote the Wizard of Oz, "There's no place like home."
What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Being a first-generation, former foster care university graduate.
What's the WORST career advice you've ever received? To slow down.



MALLORY DREWES 39

Occupation: Service Account Manager
Email: Mallory.Drewes@bunn.com
Education: Bachelor's degree, business
Family: Philip, Madalynn and Ella Rose.
Affiliations/community activities: Annual Patrick Sheehan Golf Outing that raises money for families in need locally. During my time at Capitol Radio Group, I had the opportunity to help organize and promote: Radiothon, WYMG Christmas Wish, Cooling the Capitol and Little Miracles 5K.
What is your guiding principle in life? I will never forget this quote from my Aunt Leanne: "Every job, opportunity, or event adds another tool to your toolbox of life."
What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I hope to have more responsibilities and be a part of helping any company I am working for reach its maximum potential. I want to learn all I can about the industry and be a thoughtful leader who inspires others to grow and achieve anything they put their minds to.
What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Public speaking (and being live on the radio, TV and promotional videos).
What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Work at businesses you are interested in as a career so you have a clear vision when you get to college. Also, get out in the community to volunteer and network with locals.
What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Spearheading the Patrick Sheehan Golf Outing for the past 17 years, raising \$150,000 to help families in need. Nothing is more rewarding than building a legacy of giving.
Who was your childhood/teenage celebrity crush? Zack Morris of Saved By the Bell (played by Mark-Paul Gosselaar).



JOSEPH HACKER 38

Occupation: Restaurant owner/general manager, Joseph's Fine Cuisine
Email: Braydenjoseph07@yahoo.com
Education: BS in business administration and management with a focus in entrepreneurship and franchising
Family: Wife, Dovie, and children Brayden and Adelina
What is your guiding principle in life? Pray for what you want and manifest destiny.
What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? After graduating from college during the recession, I found adversity in finding sustainable employment as a real estate broker and obtaining financing to start a business. In addition, the pandemic led to Joseph's having to temporarily close due to government mandates. Businesses like ours were forced to rally together and find solutions to survive.
What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Creating employment opportunities, which benefits the growth of our local economy.
What's the WORST career advice you've ever received? During the recession in 2009, I was advised to not pursue real estate due to the economy. In hindsight, pursuing a real estate career, even part time, would have been advantageous for my professional development.
What led you to your current career? Entrepreneurship has always been a passion of mine. I built a skill set from prior positions which ultimately led to fulfilling my goal of owning and operating a business. When my partner presented the idea of opening a restaurant, I thought it was a great opportunity for not only us, but our community to experience Chef Joe Solomon's amazing food and flavor creations.
What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I pray Springfield continues to create opportunities to thrive in strategic growth and that local businesses continue to expand with the support of the community.



KYLE HUTCHINSON 36

Occupation: Video Storyteller, Neuhoff Media
Email: hutchintherradio@gmail.com
Education: Lincoln Land Community College, University of Illinois Springfield
Family: Wife, Catie, and daughter, Lizzy.
Affiliations/Community Activities: Volunteer, Land of Lincoln Honor Flight; Brand ambassador for American Cancer Society 'Men Wear Pink'; Board Member, SOB Festival.
What is your guiding principle in life? Be nice to the people you meet on the way up, because you'll meet the same people on the way down.
What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? I would say the obstacles I've overcome were in my head. Being someone who has ADHD as well as a perfectionist can give me bouts of "overthinking" or "I don't know where to begin" – in those moments, I just say start somewhere.
What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? It doesn't happen overnight. It comes from hard work, building relationships and meeting people. It's also filled with many failures.
What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? It would be helping the American Cancer Society of Central Illinois raise \$15,000 through my Brand Ambassador campaigns.
Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? When our daughter was born, it definitely changed my perspective on life. It wasn't about me anymore. It was also the 'kick in the butt' moment I needed to start tackling the goals I wanted to achieve.
What's the best purchase (under \$100) you've made in the last six months? A journal. I try to take 20 minutes at the end of the day to reflect on personal and professional things.



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MATTHEW OVERBEY 39

Occupation: Civil engineer, CMT

Email: moverbey@cmtengr.com

Education: Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Family: Wife, Kendra, and children Mason and Emmersyn

Affiliations/community activities: Illinois Society of Professional Engineers, FBI Citizens Academy Alumni Association, Springfield Southwest Baseball Association.

What is your guiding principle in life? Process and preparation will lead to quality results.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? That current residents would do a better job of conveying to outsiders what a great community we have here.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? In five and ten years, I aim to be steadfast in my current values – growing as a leader, being my wife's favorite person and creating unforgettable memories with my children. Embracing each stage of life with humor and love, I'll weave a legacy of laughter and adventure.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? That resourcefulness, initiative and planning will allow you to achieve most goals. To develop new skills and knowledge you must be committed to lifelong learning and evolution. No one becomes an expert at anything without committing to the experience.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Being trusted with the responsibility to mentor people who are newer to the profession.



SARAH ENLOW 36



JENNA L. TUCKER 34

Occupation: Attorney and partner, Rammelkamp Bradney, P.C., Jacksonville.

Email: jenna@rblawyers.net

Education: Undergraduate degree, Bradley University; juris doctor, Southern Illinois University School of Law.

Family: Husband, Kaylob Tang, and first child due any day.

Affiliations/community activities: Member and soon-to-be past president of the Rotary Club of Jacksonville; Jacksonville Promise Foundation; past president, Morgan County Bar Association.

What is your guiding principle in life? My guiding principle in life is to take responsibility for your world. This philosophy reminds me that it is within my control to take actions that impact my world – whether big or small, personally, or professionally – so that even the smallest actions have a lasting impact.

What led you to your current career? My father, Alan Tucker, was the state's attorney in Mason County for most of my childhood. I learned early on that there were different types of attorneys in our world and that I could practice the law in my own style. I knew early on that I wanted to make connections and assist people with complex topics. After that, I focused on finding a firm with like-minded attorneys who would support that vision. Rammelkamp Bradney was an excellent fit for me.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish my younger self had known that the plan does not always work out exactly as you imagined but can be so much better.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Becoming a shareholder at Rammelkamp Bradney. I feel honored to practice with my fellow partners and continue a legacy of all those before me.

What's the song you sing in the shower? My favorite song to sing, in any location, is Objects in the Rear View Mirror May Appear Closer Than They Are by Meat Loaf.

Occupation: Information technology, Hanson Professional Services, Inc.

Education: Graduate Certificate in IT Project Management, University of Illinois Springfield; Bachelor of Arts, Illinois State University

Family: Spouse, Eric

Affiliations/community activities: Central Illinois Food Bank board member, instructor at Bungee x Dené Fitness, 2024 graduate of Leadership Springfield

What is your guiding principle in life? Everyone makes mistakes and no one is ever right 100% of the time. Give people grace – even when they won't give any grace to themselves.

What led you to your current career? After getting my degree in art history from Illinois State, I was working in libraries and discovered that I loved teaching technology classes at the library; I loved the detective work of helping people find that one book their friend told them about when they couldn't remember the title or author. It wasn't a straight path, but that eventually led to me to IT – I love training people and diagnosing problems.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Being a woman in IT is not always easy. It is a field of mostly men and I often have to fight to make my voice heard.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My first promotion into a leadership role in the IT department at INB. I'm not sure I even took myself seriously in the IT field until then.

Who was your childhood/teenage celebrity crush? Orlando Bloom. The year *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* was in theaters, my friend and I went to see it 12 times. That is a three-hour movie so that was some serious dedication.



ANTHONY SCHUERING 32

Occupation: Attorney, Brown, Hay & Stephens, LLP

Email: aschuering@bhslaw.com

Education: Law degree, Indiana University Maurer School of Law.

Family: Parents, Sarah and Dan; brother, Sam; and sister, Emma.

Affiliations/community activities: Past president, Downtown Springfield Inc. I also provide pro bono legal services to several regional nonprofits and community groups.

What is your guiding principle in life? When you play, play hard. When you work, don't play at all.

What led you to your current career? I have no idea. I grew up knowing that I would become a lawyer, even before I understood what lawyers did. I'm not sure how that plan developed.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? That we "crack the code" for a large-scale, sustainable downtown revitalization. There are many factors (regulatory, financing, infrastructure, etc.) that make a large-scale redevelopment extremely difficult, but I think we are capable of doing it.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Imposter syndrome.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? That you need to take time to enjoy the process instead of solely focusing on the result.

What's the song you sing in the shower? The Bird Hunters by Turnpike Troubadours.



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JODI OGILVY 38

Occupation: Chief communications and development officer at Hope

Email: jodi.lc.ogilvy@gmail.com

Education: Bachelor of Arts in communication, Millikin University. Currently obtaining master's in Strategic Communication from USC's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

Family: Husband, Graham, and daughters, Vivienne and Josephine.

Affiliations/community activities: Member of the NPR Community Advisory Board, Ambassador of Hope, Association of Fundraising Professionals member.

What is your guiding principle in life? Leave this world better than you found it.

What led you to your current career? I began my career in corporate communications and decided I needed a change. I wanted to feel that my work was helping others and making an impact. I found a job posting for a communication specialist position at Hope, and the rest is history! I love working at Hope because not only do I get to do what I love every day, but I'm also able to see the impact I make on those we serve.

What would you like to give back to your community? A legacy of kindness that I pass down to my children.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Hard work and perseverance are worth it! Do not be afraid to say yes to new opportunities.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Being named the chief communications and development officer for Hope.

What's the WORST career advice you've ever received? Someone once told me that I would never be able to do anything with a communications degree. I followed my gut instead of that advice and it has never steered me wrong.



WHITNEY CANTERBURY 35

Occupation: Director of marketing and recruitment at Mennonite College of Nursing, Illinois State University

Email: wbraue@ilstu.edu

Education: Bachelor's degree in public relations and advertising at the University of Southern Indiana

Family: Husband, Jared; two children, Camden and Olivia, and another daughter on the way.

Affiliations/community activities: Co-fundraising chair for Town and Country Women's Club, volunteer for Petersburg Athletic Association.

What is your guiding principle in life? Be quick to offer grace. Life can be difficult, and we never know what someone else is going through.

What led you to your current career? I have always enjoyed marketing, but I became passionate about my career when I found recruitment. Recruitment is a beautiful blend of marketing and developing meaningful relationships with professionals.

What would you like to give back to your community? I have had the privilege of being the co-fundraising chair for the Town and Country Women's Club and being surrounded by driven women. We had an audacious goal of raising funds for a new park for in Petersburg. With the help of elected officials, securing several grants, various fundraising efforts, and the support of our generous community, we have raised close to \$500,000 and completed our Phase 2 goal, which is new playground equipment and turf surfacing. We are \$60,000 away from completion, which includes resurfacing our basketball court and a walking path.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? Learning how to balance work and life as a working mom can be challenging or at least I have found it to be. I'm still trying to master how to balance everything gracefully.

What's the best purchase (under \$100) you've made in the last six months? I recently purchased a new devotional, Unshakeable, and a journaling Bible. I enjoy my time in the word to help draw closer to God and help my heart's posture.



JORDAN STOTT 38

Occupation: Accounting and finance recruiter, Express Employment Professionals

Email: Jordan.stott@expresspros.com

Education: Bachelor's degree, business management and organizational leadership, Illinois College

Family: Wife, Chrissy, and children Leah, Reagan, Jay and Levi.

Affiliations/community activities: Local First Springfield, The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, Petersburg Athletic Association

What is your guiding principle in life? Do your best and think of others before yourself.

What led you to your current career? I have been blessed with wonderful people around me. My people and my desire to make a difference have led me to my current career.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My greatest hope for Springfield is that we continue to grow. I hope that businesses thrive and families live their best lives in an environment where they are safe, happy and successful.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? I'm an introvert living in an often-extroverted world. I don't view being an introvert as an obstacle, but I do acknowledge the fact that people are different, and everyone communicates differently, and sometimes that creates obstacles. Over my career in helping people, I've enjoyed overcoming each other's personality differences and achieving success together.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Helping hundreds of accounting and finance professionals navigate their career path. At the same time, helping local organizations hire people who significantly advance their cause. I was a recent recipient of the President's Club Award; given to the top 5% in my field.

What's the song you sing in the shower? King of the Road (the Randy Travis version)



RYAN KUNKEN 38

Occupation: Owner and brewer, Springfield Beer Company; Owner, Kunken Enterprises; LLC, lead underwriter, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage.

Email: rkunken@gmail.com

Education: Bachelor's degree - business administration, Illinois State University

Family: Wife, Rebecca, and sons, Gabriel and Benjamin

What led you to your current career? I started homebrewing several years ago with a goal of trying to reproduce my favorite craft beers. This led me to start researching how to build recipes and I eventually started writing my own. For fun, I started entering local and national homebrew competitions, and to my surprise, I won some of them. This, along with having discussions with friends and family who encouraged me to write a business plan, gave me the confidence to spend the next year researching and creating the business plan that ultimately led to opening a brewery. For the past 12 years, I've also worked at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? There are many, but I would like to see Springfield become a city that has clear and achievable goals for future prosperity, along with ways to meet them. Every time I have attended a city council meeting, I'm always surprised at how disjointed each alderperson's perspectives are compared to the others. Nothing great can be accomplished with the current way the city operates in my opinion, and my hope is that changes in the near future.

What app on your phone are you ashamed to say you use? Temu

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Charles Long
for being recognized with Forty under 40!





BAILEY WOOLSEY 30

Occupation: Account executive, LRS

Email: bailey.woolsey@lrs.com

Education: B.S. Hospitality Management from Iowa State University

Family: Husband, Chris, and son, Jackson

Affiliations/community activities: Co-founder, RISE Springfield; board member, Friends of the SCCAC (Sangamon County Child Advocacy Center); coach, Central Illinois Girls Hockey Association.

What is your guiding principle in life? "There's a world out there waiting for you to conquer it." This is something my dad used to say to me and it reminds me to be fearless and relentless when it comes to following something I'm passionate about.

What led you to your current career? Tremendous amounts of hard work, constantly being curious and being open to trying new things.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish I would have understood how to own every aspect of my life. There's a book by Jocko Willink that I really like, *Extreme Ownership*, and if you haven't read it, I totally recommend it. This book changed my perspective because now that I have this mindset – I feel more empowered about making decisions.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? RISE. This group has had such a positive impact for both young professionals and the community – so being part of the team that formed RISE has been an achievement I am proud of. While I personally have learned so much being part of this team – I'm most proud of seeing how my team has also grown, and hearing from attendees how this group has positively impacted their lives.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? My son Jackson was born in the fall, and it has completely changed my perspective on just about everything. The first time I held him, I learned you could truly hold your entire world in your hands. He inspires me every day to become the best version of myself.

What's the best purchase (under \$100) you've made in the last six months? A paper planner! I have to write things down. I've tried many varieties over the years but my Full Focus (planner) is by far my go-to.



CATHERYNE POPOVITCH 38

Occupation: Deputy director, Illinois State Archives, Office of the Illinois Secretary of State

Email: cnthomas09@gmail.com

Education: BA in history, Millikin University; MS in library and information science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a certificate in special collections.

Family: Husband, Jonathan, children Joseph and Jacob.

Affiliations/community activities: Council of State Archivists (Vice president/president-elect), Illinois State Historical Society (Advisory Board), Illinois State Museum Society (Board of Directors), Old State Capitol Foundation, Springfield Road Runners Club, Springfield Bicycle Club.

What is your guiding principle in life? I love the mantra "leave it better than you found it." I try to follow that advice at work, with my family and in my community.

What led you to your current career? I studied history education in college and really enjoyed doing one-on-one work with the students. I discovered that I wasn't cut out for teaching in a traditional classroom, but I love working with individuals to meet their information needs.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? In the next five/10 years I'd like things to look a lot like they are now: happy and healthy family, great relationships within the community and a career that I'm passionate about.

What would you like to give back to your community? Government archives are essential to document government actions and protect citizens' rights. I'd like to continue to serve the people of Illinois by making our state's public records as accessible as possible and to encourage the next generation of Illinoisians to learn about our state's rich and diverse history.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish I had learned years ago to be confident in difficult situations and to trust that I could accomplish what needed to be done.

What's the song you sing in the shower? Lately it's been Ocean Avenue by Yellowcard.



ETHAN J. POSEY 32

Occupation: Director of community relations, city of Springfield

Email: posey.ethan1@gmail.com

Education: BS in psychology, Howard University, and an MS in community psychology from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

Family: Wife, Tiffany Mathis Posey, and four children, Avery, Nylah, August and Leena.

Affiliations: Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., Leadership Springfield 2023 Cohort, RISE Young Professionals.

What is your guiding principle in life?

My guiding principle is the motto for my fraternity – "Culture for Service, Service for Humanity." If what you do in life is done in the service of others, then your actions will undoubtedly make a positive impact in your community and in the world.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path?

I wish my younger self knew not to take criticism personally in a professional setting.

What led you to your current career? After working as a family and community engagement liaison for Student Support Services with District 186, Mayor Misty Buscher told me her vision for a better Springfield and how I could be a vital role in shaping it into reality. She offered me the opportunity to lead the Office of Community Relations and shape it into what I think it should be. Despite my lack of directorial experience, she has trusted and supported my leadership every step of the way. I am grateful for her faith in me and for the dedication of a phenomenal team.

What would you like to give back to your community? I'd like to give back opportunity and advice, especially to young men and women of color in our city.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? In the last year I married my best friend, Tiffany Mathis Posey, which gave me three beautiful bonus children: Avery, Nylah and August. My baby girl Leena-Alison Posey was born three months later. My perspective on life has shifted to be centered on them instead of myself. I want to keep them safe and make them proud with every decision I make both personally and professionally.

What's the best purchase you've made in the last six months? The Deception trailer hitch and matching emblems for my truck.



JAMES WATTS 39

Occupation: Manager, donor and government relations, ImpactLife

Email: jwatts@impactlife.org

Education: Bachelor's degree, politics and government, Illinois State University; master's of business administration, Benedictine University.

Family: Wife, Rebecca, and children, Jaelyn, Jensen and Jaden

Affiliations/community activities: President, Illinois Coalition of Community Blood Centers; chair, Conference Committee, The Association for Blood Donor Professionals; vice chair, Public Policy Council, America's Blood Centers; member, Illinois Homeland Security Advisory Council; volunteer coach, Rochester Youth Athletic Association.

What is your guiding principle in life?

Build people up and be considerate of all people. You never know what someone else is going through, or the challenges they have already overcome to be where they are now.

What led you to your current career?

After a workforce reduction at my previous employer, I found myself looking for a new venture. At the time I did not know much about blood donation outside of my own experiences as a donor. Since then I have come to love the mission and vision of ImpactLife, our local community blood bank.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My greatest hope for Springfield is that we as a community continue to support all of our local citizens and businesses. I hope we continue to expand on business opportunities and to be a beacon in the health care industry.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? As a first-generation college student, early in my career I had to overcome significant self-doubt and a sense of imposter syndrome. Over the years I have had many great professional mentors who have helped me reach my career goals.

What's the WORST career advice you've ever received? "Follow your passion," because that doesn't always pay the bills.

What app on your phone are you ashamed to say you use? Temu.



All of us at Memorial Health are proud to contribute to the health of our community.

We're delighted **Valeria Cueto** and **Lance Millburg** are Forty Under 40 recipients.

This achievement is a symbol of their dedication and commitment to our mission to improve lives and build stronger communities through better health.

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VALERIA CUETO
Vice President
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion



LANCE MILLBURG
Vice President
and Chief Quality Officer

CONGRATULATIONS SARAH HARTWICK



on being named to the **Springfield Business Journal's 40 Under 40**. Sarah is the **IMA Vice President of Education & Workforce Policy** and the **Executive Director of the IMA Education Foundation**. Sarah works tirelessly to connect our manufacturers and educators to build our future workforce.

We are proud of you!





**TIA
MAHR**
38

Occupation: Entrepreneur, executor director of Made by Monea

Email: tmonea@madebymonea.com

Education: Bachelor of arts, communications, University of Illinois Springfield

Family: Proud aunt of 17.

Affiliations/community activities: Chair, Queens Table, women's entrepreneur social club; Northside Church of Christ.

What is your guiding principle in life? Keep God first and the golden rule – treat others how you would want to be treated.

What led you to your current career? I started my entrepreneurial journey after finishing college. I was a first-generation college student and was totally lost after I graduated. I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do but knew I wanted to help people in some form. After completing intensive research, I obtained entrepreneurial knowledge and skills that I love sharing and implementing with clients. I'm the proud owner of Made by Monea, a business consulting firm. I help entrepreneurs stay in business by helping them obtain financial support for their businesses. I specialize in providing personalized business services with budget friendly options. I have a passion for helping others and I think regardless of a client's budget, they're still very deserving of help to start a business. I have helped hundreds of clients all over the world with business funding ranging from small business grants to building business credit. I take pride in being a powerhouse when it comes to working for my clients and I'm willing to get my clients the results they deserve.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? I wish my younger self would've known that college is not the only option to being successful in life.



**CLAYTON
YANTIS**
39

Occupation: Recruitment manager, Illinois Department of Transportation; Illinois and Iowa state lead for The Fallen Outdoors.

Email: clay_41_2000@yahoo.com

Education: Bachelor's degree, business administration, and master's degree, project management. Family: Wife and four children.

Affiliations/community activities: The Fallen Outdoors – a national nonprofit for veterans specializing in outdoor adventures and therapeutic activities. Active member of Chatham-Auburn VFV 4763.

What is your guiding principle in life? If it's worth doing – do it right.

What led me to help veterans? I served 13 years in the U.S. Army before being medically retired. I had a hard time adjusting after my overseas tours and the lifestyle changes that come with transitioning. If I can provide some guidance and help to local veterans through outdoor therapeutic adventures and building a stronger, more resilient veteran community, then I owe that to them and their families.

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? In five years I would like to be a part of the national board for The Fallen Outdoors.

What would you like to give back to your community? I'd like to give back to every veteran, whether they were a mother, father, son or daughter that didn't think they had someone to call or someone that could just understand what haunted them. Our organization refers as many PTSD/Suicide hotlines and VA resources as we can.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? I can be my own obstacle at times. Like everyone, I want to be more than I am but at the end of the day, I am making a difference for my own community and that's something I have to remember.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Just because they sit in a glass office with degrees on the wall doesn't mean they are smarter than you. When you find yourself in that glass office – stay humble enough to know that if you are the smartest man in the room – you need to find a different room.



**AMBER
SPAINHOUR**
38

Occupation: Assistant deputy director, labor relations, CMS, state of Illinois.

Email: amspainhour12@gmail.com

Education: Master's degree in public administration, University of Illinois Springfield; Bachelor's degree, Eastern Illinois University.

Family: Immediate family is my 4-year-old Labrador, Jed.

Affiliations/community activities: Board member, Girls on the Run of Central Illinois; member, Illinois Women in Leadership.

What is your guiding principle in life? Stay humble. Hustle hard.

What led you to your current career? I've always had a passion for public service and believe that public service is an agent of good that can have a profound impact on the lives of those around us, even through the smallest of changes.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My greatest hope for Springfield is that we continue to grow as a community and continue to put creative resources into our schools and downtown areas to make them places people want to be. Sometimes I cannot believe I have been a part of this community for 15 years after initially only coming here for graduate school. This is my home and I would love to see it continue to grow.

What would you like to give back to your community? Over the last several years I have served within multiple nonprofit organizations and would like to find new pathways to serve in the Springfield area, teaching the value of service to youth and young adults within our community.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Impressions matter always. Opportunities for growth and promotion may not always come from those immediately above you in the organizational chain.

What's the best purchase (under \$100) you've made in the last six months? A memory foam mattress pad because I'm not there yet, but getting close to 40!



**MICHAEL
MORGAN**
36

Occupation: Director of grants, Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois.

Email: Michael.Morgan0226@gmail.com

Education: BS in Public Relations, Southeast Missouri State University; MBA, Lindenwood University.

Family: Wife, Abby, and sons Eli and Mason

Affiliations/community activities: Volunteer mentor and middle school program coordinator at The Outlet, a mentoring nonprofit program.

What is your guiding principle in life? I try to give my best and support others. I believe we grow more when we uplift each other.

What led you to your current career? My career path is inspired by my mother, who dedicated her life to helping our community. She tirelessly supported families, even during our tough times. Watching her make a difference taught me the value of service. I strive to follow her example by making a positive impact in my work.

What would you like to give back to your community? I want to help young people become their best by providing support, resources and encouragement. I believe our future depends on their potential to create a better world. Through mentorship, education, and safe spaces for growth, I aim to empower them to pursue their dreams and succeed.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? If I could give my younger self advice, I'd say: "Focus on your priorities and work hard. Tackle challenges now to create freedom for your passions later." Also, "Enjoy the journey." Find joy in the process, not just the destination. Lastly, "Learn from everyone you meet." Their insights can help you grow.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My greatest professional achievement is founding "What's Next Fair" at The Little Bit Foundation in St. Louis. It started small but grew into a major event, helping students explore careers and connect with professionals.

What's the best purchase (under \$100) you've made in the last six months? In the last six months, my best purchases have been a baseball batting net, a soccer goal and a wiffle ball set. They've helped me bond with my sons and watch them improve at sports.



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VALUCK**
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Prairie State Bank & Trust

We are excited to announce that
Travis Davis has been recognized
in Springfield's Forty Under 40!

CONGRATS, TRAVIS!



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LANCE MILLBURG 37

Occupation: Vice president, chief quality officer, Memorial Health

Email: Work: millburg.lance@mhsil.com; Personal: lmillburg@gmail.com

Family: Wife, Becky; children Claire, Lydia, Andrew and Benjamin; and parents, Michael and Cindy.

Affiliations/Community Activities: Holy Cross Parish in Auburn, Part-time musician at St. Maurice in Morrisonville, Knights of Columbus member (Auburn Council), volunteer baseball coach (Auburn Youth Baseball/Softball Association).

What is your guiding principle in life? I firmly believe hard work and dedication to one's craft brings not only professional success, but personal joy. I also believe that one's integrity is the foundation that everything else is built upon.

What led you to your current career?

The most influential role for me was becoming a quality improvement practitioner. All the different clinical and non-clinical challenges, as well as working with so many amazing leaders from all walks of life I was able to learn from, have shaped me into the leader I am.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? Central Illinois has been home to me all my life, and Springfield has played an instrumental part. My greatest hope is that Springfield continues to be that "biggest small-town" where people continue to feel welcome and safe to be who they are and reach their potential.

What would you like to give back to your community? A quote that has guided me for years is: "Leadership matters." My leaders throughout my career saw within me something I didn't see in myself and helped me flourish into who I am today. It is my goal in my career to likewise lend a helping hand wherever I can to help people reach their goals.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Achieving my Baldrige Executive Fellowship. It is a prestigious recognition for business excellence.

What's the WORST career advice you've ever received? The worst career advice I have ever heard is to maximize profit. Not because profit is bad, but because we should focus on maximizing value, which is broader than just profit. Maximizing profit often involves cutting corners, reducing resources and is almost always short-term focused. Maximizing value looks at all stakeholders and determines how to create the most benefit for all.

RACHEL SELVAGGIO 30

Occupation: Director, Illinois Bankers Association

Email: rselvaggio@illinois.bank

Education: Master of business administration and bachelor of science, applied communication studies – public relations, both from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Family: Husband, Stephen, and sons Benjamin and Harrison Selvaggio

Affiliations/community activities: Executive committee member, RISE Springfield; Springfield's Young Professionals Network; Co-chair, RISE Events Subcommittee; Member, American Bankers Association's Emerging Leaders Council

What is your guiding principle in life?

Though it may seem cliché, I firmly believe everything happens for a reason.

What led you to your current career?

Entering my current career, I brought over five years of experience in event planning and over five years of experience in banking. My current job is a marriage of the two, allowing me to plan educational events for bankers across Illinois.

What would you like to give back to your community? My engagement with the RISE Young Professionals Network revolves around our mission to provide Springfield's young professionals with networking, learning, and community service opportunities. My objective is to sustain and advance this initiative.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path?

Transitioning into a career-focused role while embracing motherhood has been a significant achievement. Balancing the responsibilities of being a devoted mother/wife, a committed employee, and an engaged community member has been both challenging and fulfilling.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Aside from this honor, I am privileged to have been chosen as one of four state banking association professionals to represent Illinois and the banking community on the American Bankers Association's Emerging Leaders Council.

What's the song you sing in the shower? I cannot stop singing Stick Season by Noah Kahan or Espresso by Saprana Carpenter.



MISTY ADAMS 35

Occupation: CPA/Chief Financial Officer, Bank of Springfield

Email: madams@bankwithbos.com

Education: Bachelor of Science, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and master's degree, accountancy, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Family: Spouse, Jeremy Adams; son, Mason Adams; parents, Bill and Brenda Gauch; brother, Corbin Gauch

Affiliations/community activities: Board member, secretary and finance committee member of Sojourn Shelter & Services, Inc.; board member and secretary of Pregnancy Care Center, Springfield Park District ad hoc audit committee member.

What is your guiding principle in life? Don't sweat the small stuff.

What led you to your current career? When I was young, my dad would always joke about me going to college, getting my CPA license and opening up our own family business where he would reap the rewards of my mom (who is also an accountant) and I doing all the work. Fast forward to college, I really didn't have any better plans and I thought I would be able to make a nice living as an accountant. I ended up liking the classes and the rest is history!

What would you like your life to look like in five years? Ten? I plan to continue my professional development in my current position as CFO of Bank of Springfield. My husband and I are expecting another child in October 2024, so I look forward to both children being out of diapers.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path? Don't be afraid to ask questions! It is likely that if you are thinking it, someone else in the room probably is, too. Also, don't take feedback or constructive criticisms personally.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Passing the CPA exam was a major accomplishment.

What's the WORST career advice you've ever received? I can't say that I have had bad career advice. I have been very fortunate over the years to have co-workers, supervisors and mentors who have guided me in the right direction.



JONATHAN VALUCK 37

Occupation: Regional president, Prairie State Bank & Trust

Email: jvaluck@psbank.net

Education: Bachelors degree in communication and accounting - Illinois College

Family: Wife, Angela, and sons Landon, Camden and Logan.

Affiliations/community activities: Treasurer, Springfield Road Runners Club.

What is your guiding principle in life? Embrace change and always be growing.

What led you to your current career? I started as a part-time teller while attending Illinois College. However, I did not plan on becoming a lifelong banker back then!

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? That Springfield continues to build a diverse community with affordable housing and quality schools. I would love to see us expand our recreational opportunities as well.

What do you wish your younger self had known when you started on this path?

Prioritize your health and mental well-being. You can best help others when you yourself are healthy and happy.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? Becoming the regional president of a very successful community bank.

What app on your phone are you ashamed to say you use? Twitter, or as some people call it, X.



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Thanks to Gies Online, Aaliyah could pursue an MSM while traveling the State of Illinois. She's proud to be an Illini and Gies Ambassador.

Additional Titles

Director of PR for The Financial Literacy / Foundation Founder and CEO of The Financial Literacy Diaries | Owner of AK Boutique

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SARAH HARTWICK

39

Occupation: Vice president of education and work-force policy, Illinois Manufacturers' Association, and executive director, IMA Education Foundation

Email: shartwick@ima-net.org

Education: MPA

Family: Children Jude, Cooper, Silas and Layla.

What is your guiding principle in life? My guiding principle is that it's okay to love hard and take one day at a time. Life can get extremely busy and overwhelming so taking things one day at a time and not being afraid to take chances on the things and people that I love has been the most rewarding to me.

What led you to your current career? I had an economics teacher in high school that opened my eyes to the impact of government leaders. I attended University of Illinois at Springfield where I took advantage of every internship that I could, including staffing the education committees for the Illinois House of Representatives. It was there that I found my passion for education policy and have spent the past 15 years in roles advocating for public education.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? I look forward to the day when the downtown area has more residents to truly make it a community where people live, eat and gather.

What obstacles have you been able to overcome on your career path? I would not call this an obstacle, but I was challenged as a working mother after the birth of my children. After my oldest was born and I returned to work, I received an awful performance review. I was determined to continue working and I learned so much about myself. Never be ashamed of needing to ask for help.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? It is such an honor to be part of the 40 Under 40 list for Springfield. I am thankful to have been recognized and honored by my peers at this moment in my life because I know I could not have achieved what I have achieved without the support of my personal village.

What's the song you sing in the shower? Florida by Taylor Swift featuring Florence and the Machine.



CLARE ZIMMERMAN

35

Occupation: Pediatric hematologist/oncologist, SIU Medicine.

Email: clare.zimmerman.md@gmail.com

Education: Board certified in pediatrics and pediatric hematology/oncology; Washington University master's degree in clinical investigation; Washington University Pediatric hematology/oncology fellowship; Loyola University pediatric residency; SIU School Of Medicine; Illinois College.

Family: Husband, Brian Atlas, son, Leo Atlas; parents: Maureen Farmer and Richard Zimmerman; brother, John Zimmerman.

Affiliations/community activities: Chair, SIU Medicine Institutional Review Board; moderator, SIU Medicine Research Symposium; Leadership and Service in Pediatrics Committee, SIU Medicine; Pediatric Residency Clinical Competency Committee, SIU Medicine; Physician Pipeline Preparatory Program, SIU Medicine; Mid America Emergency Symposium speaker, Memorial Learning Center; Children's Miracle Network Radiothon; Relay for Life Springfield, 2024; Illinois College Alumni Board 2018-2023; St. Agnes Parish member, choir member and cantor; Panther Creek Country Club member.

What led you to your current career? From the time I was a little girl, I always wanted to be a pediatrician. I decided to specialize in pediatric hematology and oncology when I was in my pediatric residency.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? As chair of the Institutional Review Board at SIU Medicine, I am hopeful that we will continue to see increased cutting-edge research coming to Springfield.

What would you like to give back to your community? While I often tell my friends and families I hope that I never have to see their kids in my clinic, it is reassuring that we have great pediatric subspecialty care right here in Springfield at SIU Medicine. Not having to travel far for excellent medical care is helpful and convenient for families.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My greatest achievement is when I see my patients thriving and doing well after completing therapy.

Are there any events of the past year that have affected you and how so? The birth of my son, Leo, in November. While I always felt I was empathetic to my patients' families, becoming a mother has really changed my perspective as a pediatric physician and made me a better doctor.

What's the song you sing in the shower? I am a big Swiftie and currently singing any song from The Tortured Poets Department.

DR. RICHA PANDEY

39

Occupation: Nephrologist (kidney doctor)

Email: doc.richa@gmail.com

Education: MBBS, MD medicine, and specialized in kidney disease

Family: Husband, Dr. Rajan Kochar, and two daughters.

Affiliations/community activities: President, Asian Indian Women's organization

What is your guiding principle in life? My guiding principle in life is to approach each day with integrity and honesty. I believe in striving to be honest in my actions, and continually seeking to grow and learn. This principle helps me navigate challenges, build meaningful relationships and contribute positively to the world around me.

What led you to your current career? My mother encouraged me to pursue a career in medicine, believing in its stability and the positive impact it has on people's lives. While becoming a Bollywood actor was my first choice, I decided to give medicine a try. As I progressed through my studies and began interacting with patients, I discovered a deep passion for helping others and a genuine interest in medical science. This journey has taught me the value of compassion, resilience, and the profound difference health care can make.

What is your greatest hope for Springfield? My greatest hope for Springfield is equal access to quality health care, education and growth opportunities. I envision a holistic, preventative health care approach, strong local partnerships and a spirit of volunteerism, creating an inclusive, thriving community where everyone feels supported and empowered.

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date? My greatest professional achievement to date has been earning the trust and affection of my patients. Knowing that I've made a meaningful impact on their lives through my care and strong relationships is incredibly rewarding and validates my commitment to my profession.

What's the best purchase (under \$100) you've made in the last six months? The best purchase would have to be a convertible standing desk and a walking pad. My standing desk and walking pad have revolutionized my workspace, allowing me to stay active during long shifts and improve my overall well-being.





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New owner and name for Tax Partners Holdings

Emmanuel “Manny” Davis, 24, has acquired the tax preparation and bookkeeping business

By David Blanchette



Emmanuel “Manny” Davis is the new owner of TPH Strategies, formerly known as Tax Partners Holding, in Springfield.
PHOTO BY DAVID BLANCHETTE

How do you take over a legacy small business that was founded in Springfield 20 years before you were born?

If you’re Emmanuel “Manny” Davis, you just dive right in.

The 24-year-old Davis became the new owner of Tax Partners Holding, Inc. on Feb. 1. The tax preparation and bookkeeping business, located at 2060 W. Monroe, was established by the late Don Fuener more than 44 years ago, and Davis has already taken the firm’s clients through their first income tax season and beyond.

“So far the reaction from clients has been overwhelmingly positive,” Davis said. “A lot of people were happy that they didn’t have to change tax preparers.”

Davis knew he would have big shoes to fill, and he has been taking it one tax return at a time since assuming ownership earlier this year. He also changed the name of the company to TPH Strategies.

“I keep saying to some of the clients that the business isn’t in year one but I’m in year one,” Davis said. “Learning the processes has been interesting, trying to compare the way I want to run the business with how Don ran the business. My goal for the first two years is to just keep things running the way they have been and absorb as much knowledge as I can.”

Davis said that as a young, minority business owner, he had expected to face some unique challenges in purchasing and operating TPH, but those challenges simply haven’t occurred.

“Being a minority business owner, I was nervous stepping in after Don passed away. I didn’t know how that was going to be perceived by the public,” Davis said. “But I think that hasn’t been an issue at all. Everything has been quick and easy.”

Davis said that Cindy Fuener, a TPH employee and Don’s widow, “did some creative financing on how she structured the sale of the business.” Davis also secured a Small Business Administration loan for working capital, and has had a good relationship with Bank of Springfield that has helped to get things up and running.

Davis was born and raised in the Chicago area. He earned an undergraduate accounting degree from Millikin University in Decatur where he met his fiancée, who lives in Springfield. Davis earned his MBA from the University of Illinois Springfield, worked in accounting with Sikich LLP in Springfield, and then took a job in finance with the private equity firm Advantage Capital in St. Louis.

Davis had a five-to-10-year goal of owning and operating his own tax preparation business, but that timetable advanced when

he learned about TPH from an old colleague. When Davis looked further into the possibility, he discovered that his fiancée’s mother was also a TPH client. She put her future son-in-law in touch with Cindy Fuener in November 2023.

“I called Cindy and she told me how many clients Don had, how he did payroll, how he did tax services and tax preparation,” Davis said. “We decided to meet in person to see how interested I really was in buying the business, so I came down that next day. I felt like we hit it off pretty quickly.”

Cindy explained that she wanted to find a good steward for her late husband’s business and their clients. Offers had come in from multinational corporations and smaller entities, but she was determined to keep the business local and personal.


“She explained to me how nothing really felt right until we met, and I felt the same way,” Davis said. “I fell in love with the clients, I fell in love with the building, and knew that I could continue on with the business and with Don’s legacy.”

The first step Davis took was to retain the firm’s two employees, Cindy Fuener and Alice Foss, so clients would have some familiar faces when they walked through the door. Next came a mailer that Davis sent to all TPH clients to introduce himself to them and to assure clients that the business’ name and method of operation would remain unchanged.

“The only real change I have made so far is decorating this office and changing the form that the clients fill out,” Davis said. “Right now I’m learning everything I can about our clients, their work and their personal stories so we can cultivate their individual tax stories.”

Davis attained his Enrolled Agent Certification with the Internal Revenue Service in May. He has joined the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce and several local tax professional groups, and feels Springfield has a lot to offer small businesses and the people who operate them.

Meanwhile, Davis said he’s in it for the long haul with TPH.

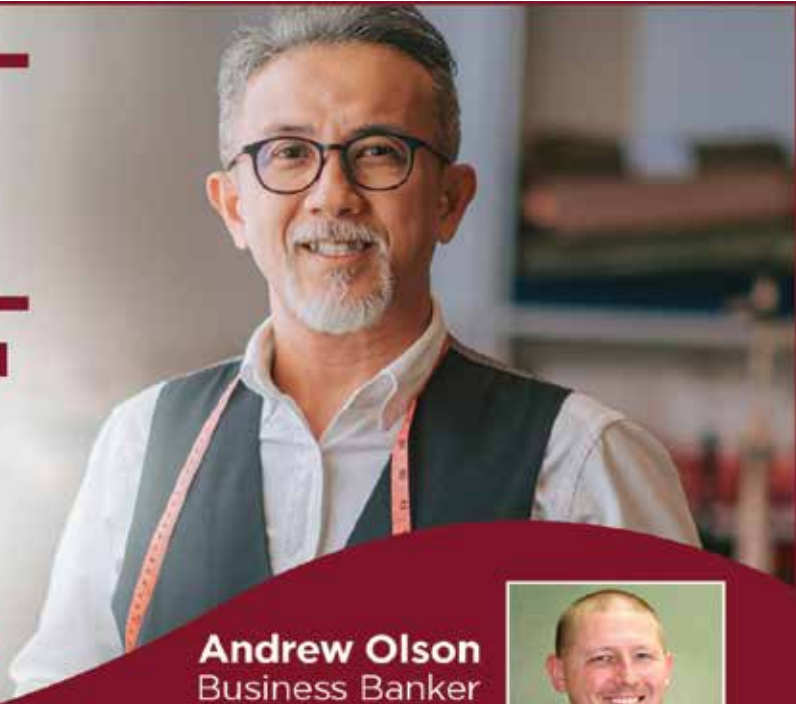
“Don built something here and I really just want to keep it going,” Davis said. “He put in 44 years and hopefully I can put in 44 years. I’m here to stay, I’m here to serve the local community.” 

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Three sisters join forces to open a day care center

By Jean Campbell



Sisters and co-owners of Independent Childcare, Nursery and Preschool: Tearetha Plair, left, Christie Carter, center, and Cynthia Daniels with some of the children they care for. PHOTO BY JEAN CAMPBELL

With 128 enrolled children, ages six months to six years old, Independent Childcare Preschool and Nursery is a lively and successful business just 18 months after opening.

The founders and owners are three sisters: Cynthia Daniels, 55; Tearetha (also known as "T") Plair, 54, and Christie Carter, 49. They opened the day care in December 2022 at 1551 Madison Place on the east side of Springfield. While the center is fairly new, caring for kids has been part of their lives for decades.

"It all started with our mother," says Plair. "Our family moved to Springfield in 1986, and our mother opened a home day care, which she still operates to this day. She also takes in foster kids and helps families in need of a short-term place to stay. So, she embedded in us a caring nature for kids."

Daniels adds, "After working at our mother's day care, we moved on and each opened day care businesses in our own homes. We love kids. We are blessed by the joy and smiles they bring us every day."

Over the years, the women grew in their child care knowledge and experience. "We talked about expanding our services and decided to do it together," explains Carter. "We are not only sisters but also the best of friends. We each have our strengths and weaknesses, so we balance each other out."

It helped that they found a building

available for lease that was originally a school. The location and space met their needs. The center houses eight classrooms: two for babies, two for 1-year-olds, two for toddlers and two for preschoolers. It also has a large indoor play area, a kitchen and an outdoor playground.

The ladies said they were fortunate that all the children they previously cared for in their homes chose to move with them to the new center. In addition, they each owned cribs, high chairs, toys and other necessities that they moved from their home settings to the new building.

Daniels says it was difficult for them to get financing for the new business, so they pooled their own funds. "It was a struggle, but we worked it out," she notes. "We are now looking at opportunities for grant funding."

The women share the title of director, with responsibilities that include overseeing staff, government compliance, bookkeeping, payroll and hiring. "We make all our decisions together," shares Carter. "If one of us disagrees, we don't move ahead. We look for options and solutions until we can all agree."

Among the goals of the center is to ensure kids are growing and learning the right curriculum for their age. Ongoing daily communication with staff and parents is also high on the list of goals.

"Parents were very excited about our new

venture," says Plair. "They know us and their kids know us, so the change was easy and convenient for them."

One parent, who enrolled her twin sons in Independent Childcare after her mother passed away in 2023, expressed her happiness with the services. "We are blessed by the love and care they provide," she says. "The center provides a bright light and ray of hope to the community. It is inspiring to see small business owners providing a safe haven for many families and children, along with employment to others."

When asked how they decided on a name for the center, the sisters said they are firm believers that everybody will one day have independence, so they lead every child to believe they can become independent learners and that they will become independent and successful adults.

At the end of the day, Daniels, Plair and Carter agree that running a family business is all about trust. They can go to each other and know they will back each other up. They are proud of what they have accomplished and look forward to continued support from the community. **SBJ**

Jean Campbell is a Springfield writer who loves sharing stories about local people, places and businesses.

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Emmanuel Davis

Learning together in the family business

By Holly A. Whisler

Steve Shelton, founder and president of Solution Printing, started learning about printing during his time in the U.S. Army, where he was tasked with printing reports and various projects. After his time in the military, Shelton was living in Indiana and working in sales but wanted to get closer to his hometown of Pittsfield, where his family lived. He ended up in Springfield, and worked for Horace Mann managing the company's print shop until it closed. Shelton decided it was time to do his own thing, and in 2003 he founded Solution Printing, 3135 S. 14th St.

"I worked many 24-hour days getting it built up," said Shelton of being a one-man shop and building his printing business from the ground up. He said those long days were tiring but very much worth it. Just five years later, Shelton received a cancer diagnosis that would change his life and that of his family. His son, Greg Shelton, was in college at the time and came home to help his dad run the business.

"I came back to Springfield in 2008 and finished my degree at Benedictine while working in the print shop with my dad," said Greg Shelton. He said he was shocked to learn there were so many printing companies in Springfield at that time, and he wondered what he was getting himself into.

"I could not imagine how it was possible for so many printing businesses to thrive in a city the size of Springfield," Greg said. "I wondered how we were going to compete?"

Steve was well-versed in offset printing, which for decades was the standard method of printing large orders on a variety of media. Greg recognized his father's wisdom and experience and learned all he could from him. In order to remain competitive, however, Greg Shelton knew the company would need to incorporate digital printing in order to do large-format jobs such as banners and signs.

Greg said he had to drag his dad into the digital-printing era, and in retrospect Steve is thankful that his son had a foothold on the next generation of printing and the patience to help him adapt and keep the business current. "He took it to the next level with digital and large-format projects," said Steve.

Steve described working together in a family-owned business as an ongoing learning curve. "It's kind of like a marriage. We have our ups and

downs, and after disagreeing on something, a few minutes can go by, and we're on our way again. We've grown to work well together," he

matter, and he said the community always brings it back around. The company has donated signs and printing services for a variety of nonprofits



Three generations of Sheltons: Madeline, Greg and Steve in the Solution Printing shop.

PHOTO COURTESY SOLUTION PRINTING

said.

For his part, Greg said he's learned a great deal from his dad. "The family bond creates a space where we're both invested, so it is in our best interest to work together and reach a common goal." He said, "We can bounce ideas off of each other, and we listen because we are invested. There's no reason to not find a way to work together."

Solution Printing has six employees, with Greg serving as the delivery person and the sales force. He said, "It works out well for me to do the deliveries because I get to see the customers, and that builds relationships. I enjoy working with our customers and getting to know the community and making those important connections with people and our printing projects."

Steve gives Greg credit for understanding how to give to the community in ways that really

and special events.

The family business involves more than just father and son. Steve's wife does some of the bookkeeping, Steve's other son, who lives in Texas, works on the website, and Winnie the dog keeps everyone relaxed and entertained. However, one boundary is that there is no talking about business at family gatherings. Greg said, "My mom would get really mad when we talked about business at family gatherings, so we stopped."

Steve said that although it can be challenging to work with family, everything has a tendency to work itself out over time. "We work well together. We each have strengths in different areas so we complement one another," said Steve. "We both want the business to be successful so we work it out." **SBJ**



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Maid-Rite: 100 years without many changes

By Ed Wojcicki

What's happening at the Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop is not complicated, but it is enduring. Preparing to celebrate 100 years in business, longtime owner Sam Quaisi downplays his product's specialness while providing a distinctive spin on why it is indeed special.

"There is nothing special about the recipe because it's the same. It's the same thing, over and over. You can taste it tomorrow, it'll be the same," he says of the sandwich first served there in 1924. "We keep the tradition going; there is no changing. No changing of the recipe. Or on how we handle the food, or how we talk to the customer."

He was talking about the signature "loose meat" Maid-Rite sandwich, made with ground beef and spices, topped with onions, relish and mustard. Reminded that one customer routinely ordered sandwiches with no onions, Quaisi said that is what he calls a "made-wrong" sandwich.

Other signature items on the menu board include homemade root beer served in a frosted mug and homemade shakes. Quaisi has added a Maid-Rite horseshoe sandwich and chilli (he uses the Springfield spelling of chili) in response to customers, and he won a Trailblazer contest in 2009 for having the best original horseshoe sandwich.

It's helpful to be on Route 66 and near the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Quaisi said. His guest book reveals people signing in from many states and countries. Mathieu Hofner, a television producer from Neuchâtel, Switzerland, visited the shop for a program he was filming for European audiences. The reach of Maid-Rite has a long arc, including favorable reviews on Yelp and TripAdvisor.

In the early 1920s, two men from Quincy began the restaurant in a converted caboos in a time when east-west railroad tracks ran where Jefferson Street is now located. A larger dining area and air conditioning have been added, but it's still easy to observe the original atmosphere.

The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, when Clarence Donley owned the shop. The National Register application, prepared by chief city planner Charles Kirchner, describes Maid-Rite as "a relatively unchanged example of a movement begun in the 1920s to serve the dining needs of an increasingly prosperous and mobile American society," fueled by the rising use of the automobile by commuters.

Quaisi was living in Chicago when a friend encouraged him to move to Springfield. "He said, 'Come on, it's a small town, you would like it.' Then I came here, and I'm stuck here," Quaisi said.

He got married and worked for the state at the Department of Revenue, across the street

years ago he did open a "horseshoe store" in St. Louis that did well for three years before losing its lease. His three adult children all live in St. Louis now.

Quaisi admits he has had to adapt. It's why he serves horseshoes and chilli and not just the



Sam Quaisi has owned Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop, billed as the nation's first drive-thru, since 1996. It will celebrate a century in business this year. PHOTO BY BETHANY PAYNE

from Maid-Rite. He said he was working with motor fuel taxes and collaborating with the secretary of state on stickers for semi-trucks.


He was also flipping houses and looking for a larger project when he learned that Donley was interested in selling. So Quaisi, after 12 years of working for the state, bought Maid Rite in 1996 and soon began managing the shop. He said he learned about food handling working at Illini Country Club, Sangamo Club and Maldaner's.

Although a national Maid-Rite chain with franchises emerged in 1926, Quaisi said the Springfield restaurant has always been independent, never part of the Iowa-based Maid Rite Corp. He said a franchise store opened on Springfield's west side in the 1980s, but then-owner Donley fought it until it closed. Quaisi has no plans for other locations, though about 20

original sandwich. He points to the bold "CASH ONLY" sign on his sliding drive-through window and explains he installed a credit card machine to handle customers who want frozen sandwiches shipped to them, which he does via FedEx.

"I try to keep it old-fashioned," he says, emphasizing he still prefers cash. Then he chuckles and says of his customers, "I tell them cash only and they don't listen. They want to use their credit card," which he readily accepts.

Perhaps one of the reasons Maid-Rite has endured for a century is because it has adapted with the times, while still preserving its original history.

Ed Wojcicki freelances from Springfield after retiring from both UIS and the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police. 

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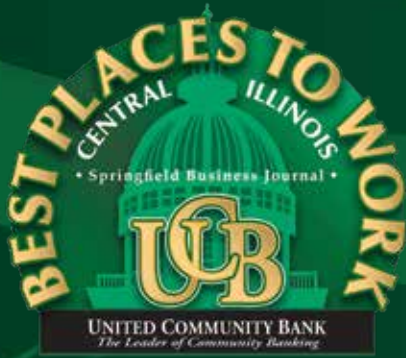
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2. Tina McCain speaks on behalf of First Impressions Day Care Center.
3. Chris Bullock, general manager of Capitol Radio Group, accepts the company's Best Places to Work award.
4. More than 100 members of the business community and employees from the companies being recognized attended this year's Best Places to Work ceremony.

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Solid Rock Youth Transitional Services

By Janet Seitz

Marscia Anderson believes God put it in her heart to start Solid Rock Youth Transitional Services after she learned that 40% of youth who age out of foster care end up homeless. "That was a devastating statistic," she said, "and it broke my heart to learn so many young people are homeless and trying to figure out life and adulthood on their own, especially after experiencing the challenges of the foster-care system. God has always placed youth in a special place in my heart and fostered youth have always been a part of my life as several members of my family are from the foster-care system."

When Anderson learned that statistic she was serving as a board member with The James Project. The nonprofit organization supports Sangamon County foster families with homes, parental support, children's provisions and a community of supporters. However, Anderson saw a need for another nonprofit that would help former foster children who are too old to receive services through the child welfare system.

Anderson and her mother, who was a social worker, planned to start Solid Rock upon her mother's retirement, but her mother passed away before they could launch it together. "But God made it clear to me that the statistics haven't changed, and there are still young people who need help," Anderson said, "so with the help of my board and the support of family and friends, Solid Rock was launched."

The nonprofit serves Sangamon County and is dedicated to providing comprehensive support to young adults transitioning to adulthood after or while aging out of the foster-care system. That support includes providing housing, life skills training, workforce development, educational resources and direct health support to thrive independently.

"I had heard and seen firsthand the passion and hard work she (Anderson) had been putting in to create this organization," said Loren Toney, Solid Rock's social media and marketing coordinator, "and I was inspired at how much this work had



Cullen Watkins, a youth advocate at Solid Rock Youth Transitional Services, assists during a move-in day. Since launching two years ago, the organization has provided transitional housing for seven young people aging out of foster care. PHOTO COURTESY SOLID ROCK YOUTH TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

the potential to change lives." Toney joined Solid Rock in December 2023.

"I'd say our Solid Rock Mother's Day fundraisers are the times where I feel the impact of our work the most," said Toney. "Every year we host the brunch to inform our community of our cause, while also honoring motherhood, those who may have a complex relationship with motherhood and maternal figures. We also honor those who have been impacted by the foster-care system."

Prior to the second annual Mother's Day fundraiser, Toney cited several accomplishments during the organization's two years of operation. Among those is raising \$20,000 for programs and services for youth in need. A grant allowed for kick-starting new programming initiatives, further expanding outreach and effectiveness in assisting with transitioning foster youth. To date, seven young individuals are successfully housed, providing them with stability and support as they navigate the challenges of independent living. Solid Rock has set ambitious goals of serving 200 foster youth and families and raising \$100,000 to amplify its impact in ending youth homelessness.

Anderson said the most challenging part of their work is understanding that they can't save everyone and participants have to be open to partnering for their journey. "So, that can be challenging, but we have to continue to be relentless and meet them where they are," she said. "The most enjoyable part is when the participants hit a milestone, which can be any step in the program. It encourages them as well as the staff that we just have to keep going – even though it takes time and it is challenging, we just have to take it one step at a time."

Cullen Watkins, who works for Solid Rock as a youth advocate, guides participants through a 10-step process that includes goal setting with action plans, daily check-ins, weekly one-on-one connections, peer support and mentorship groups. When connecting the participants to different services, he said he initially allows the participants to advocate on their own behalf.

"I also understand there are many societal

norms that many of our participants never learned, and those and other moments of need are when I advocate in their best interest," Watkins said. "One example is filling out paperwork and discussing the nuances of their personal situations with the navigators at the public-aid office."

Growing up in East St. Louis, Watkins was inspired by his family with parents and grandparents who served as teachers, preachers and in other community service roles. His parents were foster parents, so the mission of Solid Rock is personal to him as well.

"Helping participants accomplish goals and check items off their list brings me unspeakable joy. Living this purpose-driven life brings joy to my soul every morning. I am blessed to wake up and serve.

"The severity and frequency of trauma experienced by our participants is so sad," Watkins added. "The resiliency they pose to continue to strive to become happy, self-sufficient adults is awe-inspiring. Seeing how hard a lot of the participants fight for their future is motivating. Being the example to our participants that they have help in this fight for their life keeps me highly motivated and engaged in this essential community building work that we do at Solid Rock."

To learn more about Solid Rock, including career and volunteer opportunities and how you can support its mission, visit www.solidrockyts.org. **SBJ**

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



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Conquer the crowd: Mastering the art of public speaking

By Kelly Gust



Just the mention of the words –public speaking – can send shivers down the spines of even the most seasoned professionals. Whether it's a presentation in front of colleagues, a pitch to potential clients or a keynote address at a conference, the ability to communicate effectively in front of an audience is a skill that can elevate your career to new heights.

Those who see me at conferences, networking meetings or client engagements today might be surprised to hear that in grade school I was often described as shy. I would freeze, sweat, stutter and generally panic if asked to speak in front of a crowd. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to practice presenting in front of other students on a regular basis in graduate school, and I attended a professional development workshop early in my career that helped me improve my public speaking skills and calm the urge to panic. I learned that with a bit of practice, preparation and a sprinkle of confidence, anyone can become a captivating speaker.

1. Acknowledge the butterflies

It's perfectly normal to feel nervous before taking the stage. Instead of viewing the butterflies in your stomach as enemies, embrace them as your allies. Those butterflies are merely a signal that you care about delivering a great presentation. Prepare in advance (keep reading) and that will help prevent butterflies. When a few still make their presence known on the day of your presentation, take a few deep breaths, visualize success and channel that nervous energy into enthusiasm.

2. Know your audience

Before crafting your presentation, take some time to understand your audience. What are their interests, concerns and expectations? If you don't know, do your homework and find the answers to those questions. Then, tailor your message to resonate with them. Speak their language, use anecdotes they can relate to and address their pain points. Remember, the more you connect with your audience, the more engaged they'll be.

3. Structure is key

When we watch a car commercial on TV, we see an eye-catching, compelling message that hooks us and convinces us why the car is stylish, safe and affordable; it does not give us the nitty-gritty details of the manufacturing process, warranty or owner's manual. Every good presentation starts with a compelling, attention-grabbing introduction. Then, present your three to five main points in a logical order, using transitions to guide the flow of your material. Finally, conclude with a memorable closing that summarizes and reinforces your key message. Don't forget to sprinkle in some storytelling, humor or visual aids to keep your audience engaged.

4. Practice makes perfect

You wouldn't step onto a tennis court without practicing your serves, would you? The same applies to public speaking. Rehearse your speech multiple times until you feel comfortable with the material. Practice in front of a mirror, record yourself or enlist the help of a trusted friend or colleague for feedback. The more familiar you are with your content, the more confident you'll ap-

pear on stage. Don't practice until you get it right, practice until you can't get it wrong.

5. Harness the power of body language

Your body language can either enhance or detract from your message. Maintain good posture, make eye contact with your audience and use gestures to emphasize key points. Be aware of your hand position (clasped gently in front of you, not dug into your pockets). Don't pace or dance, but rather move with intention closer to or farther away from the audience as needed to enhance your message. And remember to smile – it actually helps you feel more relaxed.

6. Learn from each experience

Every speaking opportunity is a learning opportunity. After each presentation, solicit feedback from your audience or peers. What worked well? What could be improved? Use this feedback to refine your skills and become an even better speaker.

In conclusion, public speaking is not a hidden gift you have to be born with. Even the most shy person can be a great presenter. It's a skill that can be honed through preparation and practice. So, the next time you find yourself standing in front of a sea of eager faces, remember these tips, take a deep breath and let your voice be heard. Your audience awaits. **SBJ**



Kelly Gust is the CEO of HR Full Circle, a Springfield-based consulting firm that provides talent management and human resources consulting to organizations of all sizes and stages.



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Is a living trust better than a will?

By Sarah Delano Pavlik

Have you attended an estate planning seminar or read promotional materials that claim you must have a living trust to avoid estate taxes and probate? Has a salesperson come to your home with frightening information about probate? While a living trust is appropriate for some people, the cost

of creating, funding and administering a living trust outweighs the benefits for many people. Do you need a living trust? Let's look at the facts.

Can a living trust save estate taxes? Yes, but no more so than a will. Most estates will face no death taxation at all. The current federal estate tax exemption amount is \$13,610,000. (This is set to be reduced by 50% on Jan. 1, 2026, if Congress does not act.) The current Illinois estate tax exclusion amount is \$4 million. Regardless of the exemption in force at your death, if your estate is taxable, a will can accomplish exactly the same tax savings as a trust, possibly at a much cheaper cost. In addition, a living trust will not provide any income tax savings. All income must continue to be reported on your income tax return.

Can a living trust avoid probate? Yes, however, a living trust will only avoid probate if all of a person's assets are transferred to the trust or pass by operation of law. Many times, a person will create a living trust and leave one or more assets out of the trust. In that case, probate can be necessary in spite of the living trust.

Do you need to avoid probate? Probate in



central Illinois is not an unduly lengthy, difficult or expensive process. Illinois has adopted a simplified probate process, where the involvement of the court can be very limited. This is not true in all states. The probate process in some states (and counties, such as Cook County) can be burdensome, but this is not the case in central Illinois. Although the probate process itself is not burdensome in Illinois, the nature of the estate can cause delay and expense. For example, if a person dies without a will or a living trust or if the estate is insolvent, probate can be more complicated.

Can a living trust help you qualify for public assistance benefits? No. A living trust will not help you qualify for public assistance benefits, such as nursing home Medicaid benefits.

When should you consider a living trust? You should consider a living trust if you are concerned about the management of your affairs in the event of your incapacity. For example, you may have been diagnosed with a progressive illness. In that case, a living trust can enable the person or corporate trustee of your choice to manage your assets for you when it becomes necessary.

You should consider a living trust if you own

property outside of Illinois. The probate process is governed by state law. If you own property in three states, your estate will likely have to be probated in all three states. A living trust can eliminate the need for probate in multiple states if the living trust is set up correctly and complies with the laws of the states where the property is located.

If you conclude that a living trust may be right for you, you should deal directly with an attorney who is licensed in Illinois and who has substantial expertise in estate planning. The laws that apply to trusts vary from state to state. Forms, kits or computer software programs may not be tailored to the requirements of Illinois law or your specific situation.

In conclusion, should you have a will? Yes. Should you have a living trust? Maybe, but not because of the horrors of probate. Every person's financial situation and family situation is different. Estate planning is not a one-size-fits-all process. Your attorney should only make recommendations to you after analyzing the facts of your situation.

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



Sarah Delano Pavlik is an attorney with Delano Law Offices in Springfield.

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Travelers Kitchen

By Thomas C. Pavlik



I love exploring new cuisines. And although Springfield has an ever-increasing number of ethnic restaurants, African cuisine has been a rarity. But with Travelers Kitchen's West African-inspired menu, that's no longer true.

Travelers is in the former La Bamba space on MacArthur Boulevard. When it formally opened last September, it slowly transitioned from a Mexican restaurant into an African one. I'd been intending for quite some time to eat there and finally got around to it. So, with an intrepid friend who didn't hesitate or even ask what was on the menu, we decided to give it a shot.

The interior is utilitarian and bright. Chairs are spiffed up with white covers and there are colorful tablecloths. Diners order from the counter and are then served at the tables.

Ordering was a process, as we were advised that some dishes could take up to 20 minutes to prepare while others would come out much faster. There was a slight language barrier, but the combination of pictures of various dishes on the wall and the help of a frequent diner saw us through.

When we arrived there was only one employee, but the owner came in a little later and made sure to check in on us, which my guest and I appreciated.

Most dishes at Travelers come with rice or plantains, have nearly equal helpings of protein and vegetables and generally come with some sort of sauce. Slow braises and live-fire cooking dominate the menu. Multilayered spices amp up the flavor but are not too hot; we found nutmeg, ginger, cumin and chilies to be the mainstays.

For those who want to go all in, goat is available as well as fufu. Fufu is pounded yam, semolina and assorted other items and approximates mashed potatoes, but with a mouth feel mimicking wallpaper paste. Eaten alone, I'm not a fan, but Travelers' version comes with okra soup or goat pepper soup (slow-cooked goat with carrots and potatoes). There's also a lunch special consisting of chicken yassa (chicken cooked in a sauce of onions and veggies with African spices, served with rice), chicken shawarma wrap or benachin chicken (chicken cooked in a tomato sauce with veggies, served with rice).

We decided to start with a samosa and an eggroll. A samosa is a triangular piece of pastry wrapped around a savory filling that's fried. In our case, it was ground meat and vegetables seasoned with what I believed to be garam masala and ginger. It was delicious. So, too, was the egg roll, even if it was somewhat incongruous to see it on the menu. It came with a sweet dipping sauce that enhanced rather than overpowered the dish.

My guest and I decided to split two dishes



Chicken yassa PHOTOS BY BRANDON TURLEY


between us. We started with the domoda – an amazing soup from Gambia made from peanut butter, beef and blended vegetables that is served over rice. My sense is that the base is made from either pumpkin or sweet potatoes. Still, it's not a sweet dish at all and appears to be made with plenty of tomatoes, onions, garlic and peppers. The beef cubes were fall-apart tender, and the whole dish was simply packed with great flavors. We both agreed that the dish satisfied our taste buds and comforted our food cravings.

Our second dish was beef oxtails served with rice, beans and steamed cabbage. This was another winner. I wasn't too excited about the prospect of steamed cabbage. Boy, was I wrong. Yes, it was steamed, but it appeared to have then been sautéed with onions, sweet potatoes and some killer spices. The oxtails came with a large serving of dark brown rice that paired well with both the oxtails and the cabbage.

The oxtails themselves had obviously been simmered with love. They were coated with a delicious, slightly sticky sauce that again appeared to have been made from roasted peppers, tomatoes and onions. It was very similar to eating rib tips – it's messy and takes some effort, but the payoff is well worth it.

One regret is that my guest and I both reflexively went with water. Later that day, as I sat down to type

up my notes, I noticed a drink option called wonjo on Travelers' menu. Thanks to the internet, I now know that wonjo is a Gambian drink made from dried hibiscus leaves, citrus of some sort, juice or sugar and peppermint leaves. It sounds refreshing, and I wish I had given it a try.

My guest and I both commented that we would come back. And that's the praise that's most meaningful to a restaurant. With such unique cuisines, not all dishes will please every palate. But we applaud Travelers Kitchen for its boldness and great flavors. Well done. 

Address: 1731 S. MacArthur Blvd., Springfield
Phone: 217-670-1654

Website: facebook.com/TravelersKitchen217

Kitchen hours: Monday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday 12-9 p.m.



Jollof rice with chicken and plantains PHOTOS BY BRANDON TURLEY

Springfield Clinic opens newly renovated facility



The endocrinology and nephrology teams have relocated to a newly renovated facility at 401 E. Carpenter St.

PHOTO COURTESY SPRINGFIELD CLINIC

Springfield Clinic held a ribbon cutting June 24 to celebrate the relocation of the endocrinology and nephrology teams to a newly renovated facility at 401 E. Carpenter Street. After more than a year in the works, Springfield Clinic is ready to welcome patients to the renovated facility. Tours of the facility were offered during an open house, providing an

opportunity for the community to see the enhancements and improvements made to better serve patients.

Key highlights of the new location include expanded waiting areas, improved patient privacy and lab access on both the first and second floors, ensuring that patients can conveniently access the services they need.

"We are dedicated to improving our patients' experience," said Tom Fitch, vice president of facilities, real estate and construction at Springfield Clinic. "The relocation of our Carpenter building is one example of our commitment to providing high-quality care while prioritizing convenience for our patients."

SIU employee named Social Worker of the Year



Hannah Jacobs, a licensed clinical social worker at SIU Center for Family Medicine, has been named the 2024 Social Worker of the Year by the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter.

Jacobs has worked at the SIU Center for Family Medicine, a federally qualified health center (FQHC) serving medically and socially complex patients, for the last eight years. She serves as administrator for the SIU SOM Student Hotspotting Program, provides education to medical students and residents, is the current supervisor for the Behavioral Health Intern Program and provides therapeutic services to patients within the FQHC.

Jacobs received a master's degree in social work from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2017.

In support of their nomination of Jacobs, SIU associate professor and residency program director Nicole Mirocha wrote: "...the incredible dedication [Hannah] has had to improve access to care, promote health equity, teach the skills needed to care for some of the most vulnerable patients, and inspire all of us to continue to serve our communities to the best of our abilities."

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