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A tale of pluck

BARNABAS HELMY'S ELECTRONIC PUCK
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2017 | Small Business

award winners

Each year, the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce recognizes outstanding entrepreneurs in the community. Presented by Hickory Point Bank & Trust, the 32nd Annual Small Business Awards ceremony was held June 20 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Photos by Terry Farmer |



Lifetime Award – Business Owner of the Year - Glen and Lola Garrison, Garrison Group, Inc.



Not-for-profit – Business Director of the Year - Keith Wetherell, Illinois AMVETS.



New & Emerging – Business Owner of the Year - Daren and Lisa Bohannon, Mosquito SQUAD.



Outstanding Civic Involvement – Business Owner of the Year - Susan Langheim, Friendly Chevrolet, Inc.



Small Business – Owner of the Year - Laurie Fitzsimmons, Tracee Kelly and Rex Curtsinger, Rexx Battery Co. / Battery Contact, Inc.



The main Gillett House sits atop Elkhart Hill and was built in 1873.

ALL PHOTOS / COURTESY FINE AND COMPANY

Old Gillett Farm to be auctioned

Estate was home to ‘Cattle King of the World’

BY MONICA STABILE

In 1868, John Dean Gillett was known as the “Cattle King of the World.” The influential businessman was a close friend of Abraham Lincoln and was known for, among other things, developing the Shorthorn cattle breed. He established his farm on Elkhart Hill, north of Springfield, and after being in the family for several generations, the historic farm is slated for auction in August.

The sprawling, 785-acre Old Gillett Farm sits on the highest point of land – nearly 800 feet high – between Chicago and St. Louis. Buildings located in Springfield are visible from the farm on a clear day, dotting the horizon. The farm overlooks Interstate 55, making the vehicles passing below resemble toy cars from a distance.

The Gillett House and the smaller Drake House, built in 1873 and in the 1930s, respectively, cap the top of the hill. The Gillett mansion was originally built in 1870, but was ruined in a fire and rebuilt in 1873. The mansion features seven bedrooms, five bathrooms, a powder room and three fireplaces.

Furniture and art pieces spanning 150 years adorn every room of the 10,000-square-foot house. Every room is styled differently to show the range of tastes and family contributions to the

farm’s decor. Glass chandeliers from New York City welcome guests upon entering the big house, while ceramic tiles depicting animal scenes frame each fireplace, and the original cast-iron stove dominates the large kitchen.

In 1906, the Gillett family began to expand the home, adding 22 rooms and a water tower to the original farm house. The Gilleths employed German woodcarvers to use walnut timber from the surrounding trees to build the interior panels and the staircase. Renovations were completed in 1908, and the farmhouse hasn’t been changed since.

The kitchen has the greatest mixture of the past and the present within its large quarters and many rooms. A plate warmer constructed of pipes sits behind the main door to the kitchen. The family reportedly used the plate warmer to impress guests while hosting events. Hot water pumped inside the pipes kept warm the plates which sat on top of the many shelves. In the main kitchen area, a modern-day microwave sits close to a stove and two refrigerators. An adjacent pantry holds several locked metal containers that were once considered the icebox, where milk and other perishable items were stored. Blue and white ceramic jars containing flour sit neatly on the counter.

Gillett had a strong influence as a businessman on central Illinois. He bred

and raised livestock, annually shipping more than 2,000 cattle and 1,000 hogs to Europe. That made Elkhart an important shipping town on the Chicago & Alton Railroad during the 1800s.

The family also has a rich history dating back to Abraham Lincoln being the family’s lawyer. When Gillett and two other businessmen decided to plat a new town to take advantage of a proposed railroad depot between Springfield and Bloomington, they turned to Abraham Lincoln to handle the legal work. They eventually named the town Lincoln, making it the only town to be named for Abraham Lincoln before his election to the presidency.

Lincoln would also frequently stay at the Kentucky House while in town. The Kentucky House no longer exists at the bottom of the hill, but it would have provided shelter for traveling lawyers.

Richard J. Oglesby, who served three nonconsecutive terms as Illinois governor between 1865 and 1889, married Gillett’s eldest daughter. They built a 46-room mansion, known as Oglehurst, across the hill from the Gillett house. The Oglesbys are buried in the local cemetery on the hill.

A Gillett descendant later married into the Drake family, which owned the Drake Hotel in Chicago. During the Great Depression, the Drake family lost the hotel, and Elizabeth and William Drake moved to



the Old Gillett farm to raise their children. Their granddaughters, Lisa Pasquesi and Cathie Carolin, now own the farm.

According to Michael Fine, head of Fine & Company, LLC, which is conducting the farm auction, the granddaughters decided to sell the farm because it became too expensive to maintain, and it was time for them to move on to other endeavors. In addition to selling both the Gillett House and the Drake House, all of the farmland surrounding the hill will be auctioned off.

Standing on the wrap-around screen porch while providing tours of the estate to reporters, Fine pointed out the vast view of the distant horizon.

“There’s nothing like this in the Midwest,” he said. ♦



Wood paneling in the Gillett House was made from walnut lumber felled nearby.



The house is filled with antiques and has several fire place.



The large dining room leads to a kitchen with its own eating area next to a large, cast-iron stove.

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PHOTOS BY LEE MILNER

On July 11, *Springfield Business Journal* celebrated the 2017 Forty Under 40 selectees with a ceremony in Brookens Auditorium at the University of Illinois Springfield. The program honors young people whose efforts enrich our local business community and the community as a whole. They represent, in part, the future of business in our community and in central Illinois.

To learn more about Forty Under 40, or to nominate someone for next year, visit bit.ly/SBJ4040.



The 2017 Forty Under 40 selectees



Recipient Bekah Huston (third from left) celebrates with friends.



Selectees Erica Austin (left) and Tiffani Saunders.



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Sonya Jones of HSHS was the keynote speaker.



Justin and Kendra Cooper were the only husband and wife to both be selected. Kendra is shown here with Eloise Mackus, president and CEO of Security Bank. Justin is pictured with Dr. David Larson, interim associate dean of the College of Business and Management at UIS.



Recipient Jessica Leach (center) celebrates with family.



Selectees Patrick Sheehan III (left), Dan Pietroburgo (center) and Eric Easley (right).

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Just warming up

Weidner Refrigeration honored for unique project

BY NAOMI VELAZQUEZ GREENE

Imagine using a swimming pool to heat and cool your home.

That's what Weidner Refrigeration in Divernon did for a client last year, and it earned the company top honors among its peers statewide.

Dave and Linda Weidner started their business in 1974, offering high-end heating and cooling for residential and commercial buildings. In 2000, they added geothermal to their repertoire, and the swimming pool project grew out of that.

The project takes advantage of a unique property of water: it can absorb plenty of heat without increasing in temperature by the same amount. That's why it takes a while to boil a pot of water and to cool that water back down. This property means water can be used to "store" heat.

According to Dave Weidner, the pool system his company installed involves two tanks – one hot and one cold. Water is pumped between the two tanks as needed, using the pool as a heat exchanger. Coils carry the water inside the home to warm or cool the air, depending on the season.

The pool's temperature is set at 82 degrees year-round, and the system can either cool the home while storing heat in the pool or heat the home by drawing heat from the pool.

Effectively, the system isn't creating heat; it's simply moving heat that already exists.

Weidner says the project is unique in the U.S.

During the annual conference of the Geothermal Alliance of Illinois, held in

Peoria this spring, Weidner Refrigeration was recognized by Illinois industry peers for the pool project with the "Top Job" residential award.

John Freitag, executive director of GAIO, presented the award to Weidner.

"Weidner Refrigeration has developed a sound reputation in the past 15-plus years as one of the best geothermal contractors in central Illinois," he said. "This is a company that really believes in – and preaches – geothermal heat pumps. They do not cut corners, and they have become well known for their outstanding work."

Part of the company's success, according to Dave Weidner, stems from their emphasis on education and training for all employees. Training is so engrained that Weidner was one of the charter members of the GAIO and helped develop the group's certification test.

He has also served as education director for the Refrigeration Service Engineers Society (RSES), a national HVAC training organization. Weidner Refrigeration's technicians are also certified in North American Technician Excellence (NATE), an industry standard meant to develop and promote excellence in installation and service of HVAC equipment through voluntary testing.

Despite the recognition received, Weidner takes greater pride in the company's customer service and satisfaction. Weidner doesn't even hesitate to tell potential clients to get a second opinion.

"I don't just sell a system," he says. "When I bid on a job, I find out what they want and what they need. I'm up front about telling them what will or won't work. I'm basically educating them on what their options are." ♦

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U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (second from left), D-Illinois, meets with delegates from Springfield in Washington, D.C., including Springfield mayor Jim Langfelder (third from left).

PHOTO / GABIE CAMOZZI

Springfield chamber leads advocacy trip to D.C.

BY ROBERTA CODEMO

How does a community make sure its needs don't get overlooked in Washington, D.C.?

One time-tested way is to go there and make a case in person.

That's what the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce did in June when it led a delegation of local government, business, education and labor leaders to the nation's capital.

The group met with congressional leaders and federal agencies, including the Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Education and Environmental Protection Agency, seeking federal assistance for several projects in Springfield and the surrounding area.

Josh Collins, director of business and community development for the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, said it's common for communities to come together to send one message. He pointed to Bloomington and Champaign as examples.

"We hear from federal officials that having a unified message helps a lot," he said.

Each year, the Springfield/Sangamon County Community Partnership identifies community priorities. Since 2009, the biggest community priority has been the Springfield Rail Improvements Project. Collins credits the community speaking with one voice as the biggest reason the project received two competitive TIGER grants from the federal Department of Transportation. Last year, the project was awarded a TIGER grant for work on the Laurel and Ash underpass. Construction is scheduled to begin this year.

"Not many assumed we would be this far along on the rail project," Collins said, adding that some people thought it would never happen. To date, work has been completed on the Carpenter Street underpass.

The delegation relayed several other priorities to federal officials, including future missions for the Illinois National Guard 183rd Wing, Springfield and Sangamon County infrastructure projects, Springfield public schools, Hunter Lake, City Water, Light and Power source water

protection, extending MacArthur Boulevard and expanding the terminal at the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport to alleviate congestion at security checkpoints.

Past trips have resulted in funding for the airport entrance road which was required to meet Homeland Security setback requirements for the 183rd Fighter Wing, a federal earmark to begin funding preliminary engineering and design for rail relocation efforts, workforce grants and other projects.

Several Springfield and Sangamon County officials participated this year, including Springfield Mayor Jim Langfelder, Sangamon County Board chairman Andy Van Meter, Springfield Ward 3 Ald. Doris Turner, Springfield Public Schools superintendent Jennifer Gill, Springfield City, Water, Light and Power chief utility engineer Doug Brown and Springfield Airport Authority executive director Mark Hanna.

Springfield's private sector sent delegates as well, including Satch Pecori, chairman and chief executive officer of Hanson Professional Services, Inc., Hanson president and chief operating officer Jeff Ball, Crawford, Murphy and Tilly senior project engineer Roger Driskell, and John McCarthy, senior vice president and chief human resources officer for The Horace Mann Companies. Hanson also donated services.

Representing organized labor was Central Illinois Building and Construction Trade Council chairman Mark Winkler, while Col. John Patterson represented the Illinois National Guard 183rd Wing.

Participants paid their own airfare, lodging and incidentals while in Washington, D.C. The delegation worked with Kathy Lydon, deputy chief of staff for federal affairs in Gov. Bruce Rauner's administration, to coordinate the trip. Planning for next year's trip begins in January.

Collins compares advocacy to water on a rock, saying it takes a long time for the water to smooth the rock.

"You can't expect instant gratification," he said. "You have to play the long game, be consistent and the payoff will come. If everyone comes together and advocates for the same thing, there's a better outcome. You have to look at the long term." ♦

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Barnabas Helmy and Puck

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

A tale of pluck

Barnabas Helmy's electronic Puck

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Like many inventions, Barnabas Helmy's Puck began with a problem.

Helmy's daughter, two years old at the time, ruined the remote control for their home's Apple TV by chewing on it.

"They're expensive, and it's not even that functional of a remote," Helmy said, sharing a story he has told dozens of times over the past three years.

Helmy recalls that when the bedroom TV remote broke, too, he decided to come up with his own solution. The result is Puck, a small device which allows smartphone control of any TV, speaker or other machine which accepts an infrared signal. Puck connects to a user's smartphone via Bluetooth Low Energy technology, using an Android or iPhone app to translate commands into infrared messages other devices can understand.

So far, Puck knows how to control more than 220,000 other devices, and it can learn new infrared codes for devices it hasn't already met. One Puck can control multiple devices, allowing users to, as Helmy is fond of saying, "toss those remotes."

Rob Patino, a Springfield patent attorney and friend of Helmy, says that when Helmy showed him the concept for Puck, he knew it could be "disruptive" to the existing marketplace.

"I think that really encouraged him and motivated him to pursue the concept," Patino said, adding that he believed so strongly in the idea that he's one of the investors.

Development of Puck began in 2014, but Helmy's path to today started much earlier. His interest in electronics began as a young man, when he would tinker with guitar peddles and eventually learn

of the relationship between form and function laid the foundation for his current endeavor.

"I've found that it has given me kind of an edge on other engineers because I have really strong design principles," he said.

Helmy built the first Puck prototype over the course of one month in early 2014. In the three years that followed, he

Lust says the "prime directive" for groups like his is to avoid being a gatekeeper. In the case of Puck, Lust knew Helmy would have to compete in a market filled with products which may not be the same, but which are similar enough to be confusing.

"We try not to pass judgement on ideas," Lust said, "but we do try to be upfront and frank about the obstacles."

With business plan in hand, Helmy visited Silicon Valley for a month, pitching Puck three times a day to venture capitalists. All told, Helmy's company, Smashtoast, Inc., raised about \$500,000 in funding.

"It's taken this long just to get to market because of the amount of capital it takes to make something on a mass scale," he said.

In 2015, Smashtoast was awarded a \$50,000 Arch Grant from the St. Louis-based Arch Grants Global Startup Competition, providing both capital and free legal and accounting services. Patino says the Arch Grant was instrumental to Helmy's success.

"It really gave him a second wind when he needed it the most," Patino said.

Patino notes that the lag between concept and execution is one of the biggest challenges for a startup.

"Sometimes realities don't play well with your expectations," he said.

"From selling single packages online to this was pretty insane, but we did it."

to build his own.

"It was a lot cheaper than buying them," Helmy said with a laugh. "They're easy to do once you figure it out."

Helmy originally studied electrical engineering in college, but he ultimately graduated from Illinois State University with a degree in oil painting. Despite the vast difference between those two fields, Helmy says having an understanding

met again and again with engineers and designers to refine the prototype.

Kevin Lust, director of the Small Business Development Center at Lincoln Land Community College, says his group met with Helmy several times to help develop a marketable business plan.

"Even at that point, there was still a lot to be done," Lust said. "To Barnabas' credit, he's done it."

Puck is manufactured at CCK Automations, an electronic circuit board maker in Jacksonville. Helmy says one benefit of keeping production local is better protection of his intellectual property. While overseas manufacturers may offer cheaper production runs, some have been accused of stealing designs to build competing products using the very same factories.

In January, Helmy attended the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), a major yearly industry convention at which electronics companies typically unveil upcoming products.

"We thought we were going to get lost in the fray, because there's so much amazing stuff out there," Helmy said. "But it was really validating for us, because everyone was coming to our booth and saying, 'We can sell this. Everything else is a couple of years away, but this is something that works now.' It was really exciting, and it really put us on the map."

The CES trip led to calls from Walmart and several other retailers, and Helmy's company reached an agreement with Walmart to sell the device in a few test markets.

"From March 27, they wanted it in stores in Miami, Dallas and Chicago – with a new display and new packaging – by Father's Day," he said. "From selling single packages online to this was pretty insane, but we did it."

Helmy hopes to see Puck sold in Springfield and across the country as early as Black Friday.

If he had to start over, Helmy says Springfield would still be his base of operations. The low cost of living has helped keep development costs low, he says, and the Internet has made it

possible to work with developers and engineers anywhere. Helmy hopes that other Springfield-area entrepreneurs are emboldened by his success.

"You just have to take a risk and figure it out," he said. "Once it's figured out, hopefully other people will use that same channel."

Lust says that while Springfield isn't known as a tech hub – he only half-jokingly adds the qualifier "yet" – Helmy's success so far serves as proof of what's possible.

"He's a terrific example of how you can draw on resources from all over the world, no matter where you are," Lust said. "There's absolutely the possibility that things can be done in Springfield."

Lust says a major factor in Helmy's progress has been his attitude and adaptability.

"Demeanor plays a big role in a business' success," Lust said. "Barnabas' demeanor throughout the whole process has been, 'Okay, here's a problem; How do we fix it?' I know that translates well to investors."

Patino adds that Springfield as a community could encourage other projects like Helmy's by supporting "business incubators" like Innovate Springfield and by creating "investment angel" groups.

"I'm really hopeful that will do a lot to help promote and give resources to people who are like-minded," Patino said. "Money is always a major issue for these startups."

Looking back on his journey and armed with new knowledge and experiences, Helmy says he could develop another product in a fraction of the time.

In fact, he's already working on his next big idea. ♦



Although Puck is not available in Springfield stores yet, Helmy expects it to be sold here as early as Black Friday.
PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

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Instacart launches in Springfield as retail delivery grows

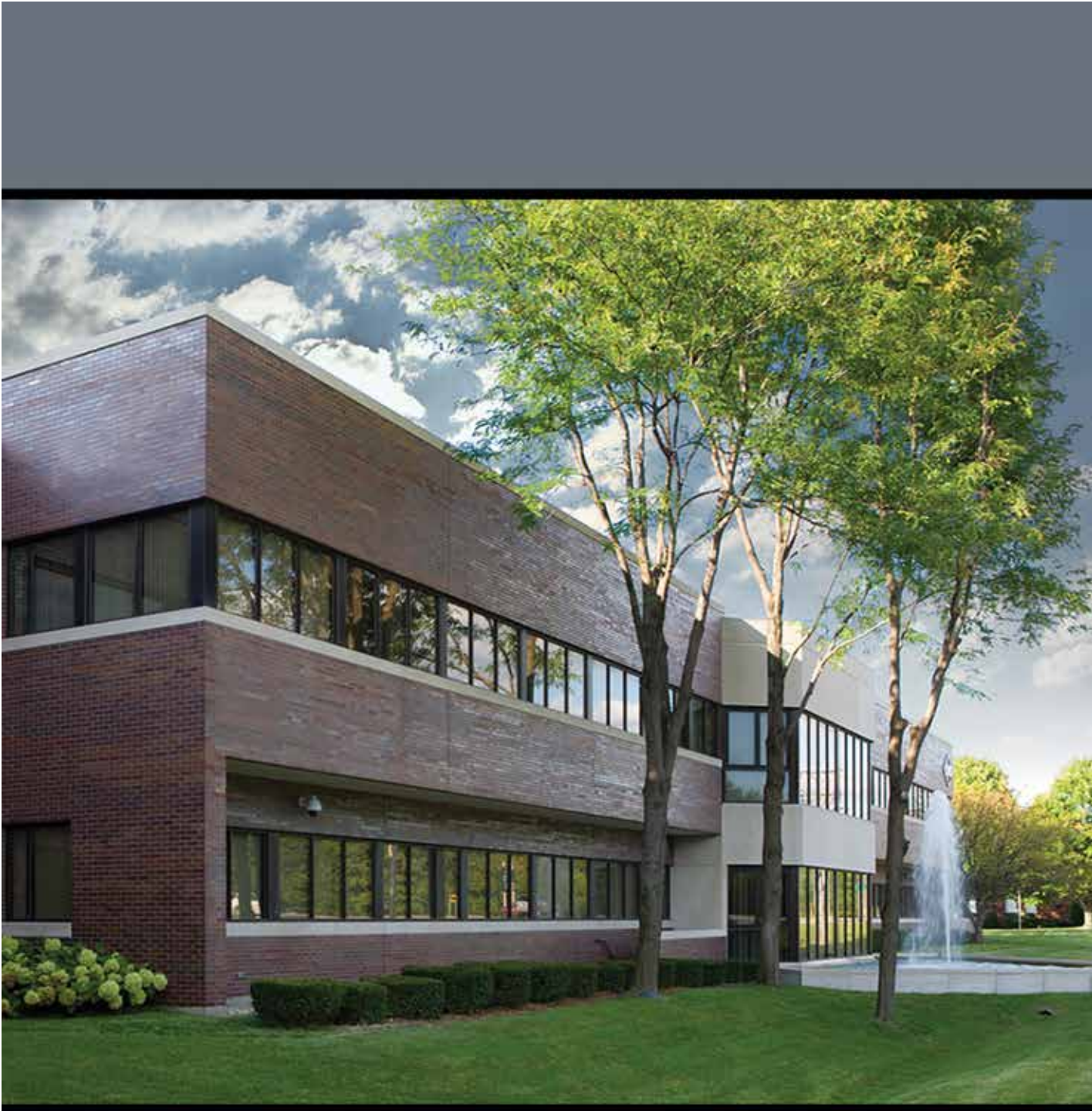
BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Delivery of groceries and other retail products is growing in Springfield, with San Francisco company Instacart the latest to launch delivery service here. Geared toward convenience, the nationwide trend is attracting both retailers and consumers. David Osborne, general manager of Instacart in Springfield, says the company started about five years ago when the company's founder, a software engineer in San Francisco, found himself too busy to shop. Osborne says Instacart originally rolled out to large metropolitan areas like New York and Los Angeles, before moving into smaller markets like Dayton, Ohio. The company launched in Springfield and the surrounding area on July 13, and Osborne says Instacart will work with 200 independent contractors here to fill

orders from retailers like Schnucks, Shop 'N Save, CVS and Petco. Delivery of retail products is a growing industry, with some retailers developing their own delivery programs and others partnering with delivery services. Online megaretailer Amazon now sells its own line of Prime-branded groceries, taking advantage of its existing delivery infrastructure to edge into the grocery industry, which has traditionally been dominated by brick-and-mortar establishments. The trend even extends beyond groceries, including ready-to-eat food; earlier this year, Springfield-based restaurant delivery service Abe's Takeout became part of Mr. Delivery, a delivery service serving several states. Hy-Vee in Springfield has offered grocery delivery for about two years, says Rochelle Slater, manager of the Springfield Hy-Vee's online shopping department.

Demand has been growing quickly, Slater says, primarily through word of mouth. Although online shopping is its own department at Hy-Vee, Slater says she often has to draft employees from other departments to help fill orders. She says many of the store's delivery customers are senior citizens, for whom delivery offers added independence. Osborne at Instacart adds that delivery appeals to busy parents and career-minded people for whom grocery shopping is a distraction. He adds that he has three children of his own, and finding time to shop is difficult with kids in tow. "Time is one thing you can't really buy," he said. "We really look at giving customers time back in their day." He says while grocery delivery is a simple concept, advancements in technology – especially the per-

vasive use of smart phones – have made it far more accessible to customers and efficient for providers. For example, Osborne points to the ability to quickly pull up directions to a customer's home or the ability for customers to specify how ripe they want their produce. Meanwhile, offering delivery service allows retailers to earn sales which might have gone elsewhere, Osborne says. As more retail moves online, offering delivery helps brick-and-mortar retailers keep customers. Slater says it was important for Hy-Vee to get an early start on the delivery trend. She says Hy-Vee even has a "dark store" in Iowa which only exists to fill orders for delivery. "A lot of stores waited too long, but now this is huge," she said. "You have to get your feet wet so that if it takes off, you can take off with it." ♦



Comcast to open retail store in Springfield

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Internet and cable company Comcast is opening a retail space in Springfield, in part to support a new mobile phone service the company is launching. The 4,300-square-foot Xfinity Store will be located at 3409 Freedom Dr., the former location of Dress Barn, and is slated to open near the end of the year. "The store will enhance the customer experience by giving our employees the ability to demonstrate the latest Xfinity products and services and educate visitors about all of their features," said John Crowley, Comcast's greater Chicago region senior vice president. "In addition, the store has comfortable seating areas that allow visitors to settle in and experience our products and services as though they're in their own homes." Comcast has already opened 198 such stores, with plans to open a new one each week this year. The stores function as retail and demonstration spaces for Comcast's growing list of services, including cable TV, internet, home security and automation, and soon, a mobile phone service based on the Verizon network.

The mobile service will operate on mobile data and WiFi, offering per-giga-byte plans and fixed-price unlimited plans. Comcast is also reportedly in talks with Sprint on a different proposed deal. Once the Springfield store is open, it will employ about 15 people, and the existing Comcast service center on Dirksen Parkway will close. The significantly larger new store will still allow customers to pay bills and pick up and return equipment. Chris Hembrough, president and CEO of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, said he's pleased Comcast is opening a store in Springfield. "Parkway Pointe is a convenient, vibrant retail location that will attract customers and other visitors from across Springfield, Sangamon County and a host of nearby communities," he said. ♦

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1	Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc. 2401 West Monroe Street Springfield, IL 62704	217-793-3800 217-787=3286 LRS.com email thru website contact page	Dick Levi	313	Global information technology solutions including mobile-friendly business websites with custom designs, application development, content management, mobile apps, search engine optimization and creative services	1979
2	MSF&W Consulting, Inc. 3445 Liberty Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-3535 217-698=3593 msfw.com info@msfw.com	John Marucco and Darrell Stoddard	50	Custom application development, websites/web-applications, IT staffing, web accessibility, document management	1991
2	LeadIT Corporation 1999 Wabash Ave., Suite 210 Springfield, IL 62704	217-726-7250 801-705=2524 leaditgroup.com contact@leaditgroup.com	Ram Talluri	50	Website development, digital marketing, mobile app development, content management systems, database services, software asset management services	2005
3	GIS Solutions, Inc. 400 Chatham Rd., Suite 201 Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-3635 217-546=3839 gis-solutions.com info@gis-solutions.com	Tim Johnson	19	Geospatial and mapping web services, including web-enabled interfaces and mobile applications	1992
4	Hanson Information Systems, Inc. 2433 W. White Oaks Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-726-2400 or 1-888-245-8468 217-726=3239 hansoninfosys.com info@hansoninfosys.com	Karen Pletsch - President, Raj Mohanty - Director of Opera- tions	15	Cloud computing and application hosting, IT security solutions/ disaster recovery and business continuity, network design and installation, hosted exchange email solutions, website design and development, web hosting, offsite backup services, equipment procurement, IP and private network services	1997
5	King Technology, Inc. 3 N. Old State Capitol Plaza Springfield, IL 62701	217-522-6700 kingtech.net kingtech@kingtech.net	M. Kay King	12	Network support, web development, custom programming/software development, geographic information systems, hosting services and video surveillance systems	1991
6	HIP Advertising 2809 Mansion Road, Suite A Springfield, IL 62711	217-789-4447 217-789=4441 hipadvertising.com info@hipadvertising.com	Myra Hoffman	9	Responsive websites with custom designs, content management, search engine optimization, hosting, and creative services, social media management and marketing, digital marketing	1993
6	MCS 2657 W. Lawrence Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-9900 217-698=9902 thinkMCS.com info@thinkmcs.com	Jesse Coultas	9	Business IT support, websites, web development, fiber internet service, phones, disaster recovery, data center services and IT product sales	2003
7	KB Computer Consulting, Inc. 510 E. Apple Orchard Rd., Suite 103 Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-0108 kb-consulting.net karlb@kb-consulting.net	Karl L. Backs	6	Computer consulting, break fix, managed services, IT security (HIPPA/ PCI compliance), project management, hosted solutions, offsite backup solutions/disaster recovery and website development	2000
8	GoWeb1 1028 South Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62704	217-241-8554 goweb1.com theteam@goweb1.com	Mark Roberts, III	7	Website and software development, SaaS provider, graphic design, website hosting, domain name registration management, email/ messaging/voice solutions	2005
9	Hupp Information Technologies, Inc. 20 Cottonwood Chatham, IL 62629	217-679-4877 217-679=0639 huppinfotech.com dhupp@huppinfotech.com	Dean Hupp	4	Specializes in creating custom business enabled web applications to streamline your most common tasks across multiple users and locations	2001
10	Clearfire, Inc. 956 Clocktower Dr., Suite 1 Springfield, IL 62704	217-953-0321 clearfirestudios.com hello@clearfirestudios.com	Casey Reid	3	Custom website design, web application development, content management systems, mobile friendly websites, technical consulting, digital marketing, search engine optimization and creative services	2007
11	DigitalI Designs virtual	217-544-8633 866-701=3631 digitalldesigns.com info@digitalldesigns.com	Troy Freeman	2	Web development, design, marketing, consultation, web hosting, social media	2002
12	AnalyticI, Inc. 1553 Reed Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-638-2636 analyticl.com jon@analyticl.com	Jon Thomas	1	Digital product design (web applications, mobile apps), website design, website development	2013
12	O3 Consulting, Inc. 2016 S. 4th St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-9803 o3internet.com carol@o3internet.com	Carol Kneedler	1	Internet marketing, mobile responsive website design and development, search engine optimization, email marketing, social media marketing, web project management, content management, WordPress	2007
13	e-websmart.com 130 South John Rochester, IL 62563	217-498-1073 800-795=0824 e-websmart.com info@e-websmart.com	Michelle Tjelmeland	DND	Website design, social media management, e-commerce development, graphic design	1999

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Boys & Girls Clubs uses popular toy to teach tech

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

At many sites around Springfield, playing with Legos is making children want to go to college.

The reason is First Lego League, a worldwide program adopted by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Illinois. The program uses the popular building blocks to awaken kids to the possibility of a career in the technology field, but the adults who oversee it say there's much more to it than that.

Founded in 1989 with cooperation from Lego Group, First Lego League uses the popular toy Lego to teach children science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM) principles. Some Springfield schools had already adopted the program, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Illinois rolled Lego League out to all of its sites two years ago after receiving a grant from the Young Philanthropist fund at the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

Bill Legge, executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs in Springfield, says the program presents a themed challenge each year - usually based on some societal problem - and groups of children around the world use Legos to devise and build a solution.

In recent years, the projects have been required to include moving parts, reinforcing the engineering aspect. Legge says solutions to last year's challenge had to involve a motor with software coding. He adds that the potential career avenues

for participants could include information technology, engineering or any number of hands-on jobs.

In addition to STEM basics, Legge says the kids learn critical thinking, research and life skills like teamwork. At the end of each season, groups exhibit their projects for a panel of judges without help from adults, teaching the kids public speaking and presentation skills.

"The kids are hooked in by the Legos, but that's really a small part of it," Legge said. "It's tapping into all these other things, all under the guise of Legos."

There are four levels within Lego League, based on age groups which roughly translate to elementary school, middle school, junior high and high school. The earliest level, First Lego League Jr., introduces children ages six through nine to the program with no competitive aspect.

By the time participants reach the high-school oriented age group, they are building custom robots which go head-to-head in complex challenges. Manufacturers like 3M donate parts for the robots, but Legge says it's not uncommon for a group to spend \$10,000 on a project.

The program also offers experiences many of the kids would otherwise never have. Legge says that for the 2015-2016 "Waste Wise" challenge, which focused on reducing waste, groups in Springfield took field trips to a water purification plant, recycling center and landfill.

"They were learning to understand our trash: how we generate it, what can be recycled and what can't," Legge said. "Every



A team from Boys & Girls Clubs shows off its model solution during the Creature Craze challenge last season.
PHOTO / COURTESY OF BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF CENTRAL ILLINOIS

group takes it in a different direction."

Taylor Kincaid, who until recently coordinated Lego League for the Boys & Girls Clubs, says that many of the children served by the Boys and Girls Clubs come from low-income households, so the First Lego League program provides exposure to technology which might otherwise be unavailable to them.

"They get something they may not experience otherwise," she said. "It exposes them to a whole world of STEM concepts at the beginning level and fuels that interest by using the Legos they already enjoy."

Angelica Salazar of Springfield is a parent whose children participate in the program. She is also a volunteer who has coached teams and coordinated the

program in Springfield for about five years. Salazar introduced the Boys & Girls Clubs to the program about two years ago, and Legge now refers to her as a "superparent."

Salazar says the program led her daughter, who is now in the robotics competition through the Illinois Math and Science Academy, to reconsider her career plan of working with animals. She's now thinking about mechanical engineering - a field that tends to be male-dominated.

Legge says he believes so strongly in the program that he's determined to keep offering it and expanding it.

"I don't know where the funding is coming from," he said, "but we're going to do it." ♦



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2	CDS Office Technologies 612 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	800-367-1508 217-753=4867 cdsofficetch.com sales@cdsot.com	Jay and Mark Watson	65	Remote managed IT network service provider, wireless networks, public safety equipment, Cloud data storage, servers, voice communications, high-def video conferencing, personal computers/laptops, digital signage, video surveillance, document/print management, copiers/printers/scanners and license plate recognition systems	1971
3	MSF&W Consulting, Inc. 3445 Liberty Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-3535 217-698=3593 msfw.com info@msfw.com	John Marucco and Darrell Stoddard	50	Custom application development, websites/web-applications, IT staffing, web accessibility, document management	1991
4	AmeriCall Communications, Inc. 447 N. Walnut Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-2255 217-522=2257 americallinc.com mdenney@americallinc.com	Gene Dinardo, Melanie Patton, Joe Ushman	15	Phone systems, networking, security, structured cabling, fiber optics, hosted solutions	2001
4	Hanson Information Systems, Inc. 2433 W. White Oaks Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-726-2400 or 1-888-245-8468 217-726=3239 hansoninfosys.com info@hansoninfosys.com	Karen Pletsch – president, Raj Mohanty – director of operations	15	Cloud computing and application hosting, IT security solutions/ disaster recovery and business continuity, network design and installation, hosted exchange email solutions, website design and development, web hosting, offsite backup services, equipment procurement, IP and private network services	1997
5	Windstream 739 South Fifth Street, Suite 300 Springfield, IL 62703	217-241-9965 217-241=9969 windstreambusiness.com al.gietl@windstream.com	Al Gietl - senior account executive	10	Advanced network communications empowering enterprise businesses with a reliable, scalable and secure network. A wide range of both data and voice customer premise equipment as well as cloud (Storage, DRaaS, UCaaS and others)	1940
6	MCS 2657 W. Lawrence Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-9900 217-698=9902 thinkMCS.com info@thinkmcs.com	Jesse Coultas	9	Business IT support, websites, web development, fiber internet service, phones, disaster recovery, data center services and IT product sales	2003
7	Mamcomm 1 Services Inc. 176 Archer Avenue Springfield, IL 62704	217-522-8942 217-522=8948 mamcomm@mamcomm1.com	Michael A. Milburn	8	Low voltage contractor providing services for any size commercial, institutional, or industrial project, including complete design-build, custom network design, installation, testing, warranting and troubleshooting of structured cabling, fiber optic cabling, nurse call, wireless access networks, video camera surveillance, security/ card access, high-def video solutions, disaster recovery, and phone systems	1993
8	GoWeb1 1028 South Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62704	217-241-8554 goweb1.com theteam@goweb1.com	Mark Roberts, III	7	Website and software development, SaaS provider, graphic design, website hosting, domain name registration management, email/messaging/voice solutions	2005
9	KB Computer Consulting, Inc. 510 E. Apple Orchard Rd., Suite 103 Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-0108 kb-consulting.net karlb@kb-consulting.net	Karl L. Backs	6	Computer consulting, break fix, managed services, IT security (HIPPA/PCI Compliance), project management, hosted solutions, offsite backup solutions and disaster recovery, website development	2000
9	Thirdwave Data/Comm Inc. 550 North Street, Suite 3 Springfield, IL 62704	217-544-4720 217-544=4758 thirdwavedata.com sales@thirdwavedata.com	Brian McLean	6	Network integration, installation and troubleshooting, surveillance, Wi-Fi, VOIP, audio/video and structured cabling	2002
10	Heart Technologies 1831 S. 11th Street Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-3100 heart.net sfeipel@heart.net	Sheila Feipel	5	Complete IT networking, phone systems, hosted voice, structured cabling, fiber optics, building wireless, nurse call/patient wandering, video surveillance, access control, fire and intrusion detection	1988
11	Midwest Computer Consultants, Inc. 2025 West Iles, Suite E Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-9236 217-718=4790 midwestcc.com sales@midwestcc.com	John Grimsley Matt Richter	4	Computer network installations/service, computer security. computer repair	1994
11	Hupp Information Technologies, Inc. 20 Cottonwood Chatham, IL 62629	217-679-4877 217-679=4878 huppinfotech.com dhupp@huppinfotech.com	Dean Hupp	4	Computer consulting with a specialization in education solutions for state governments	2001

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Springfield social media creators changing the face of advertising

BY EMILY JANKAUSKI

Social media changes the game for how advertisers generate revenue. Yet, just as social media creates a new platform for advertisers, audiences are quickly becoming desensitized to advertisements. In fact, audiences are even turning toward services which offer ad-free content, such as Netflix. The question becomes how advertisers can tap into the growing social media space without creating dull advertisements. Two local businesses have come up with an answer.

Springfield Emojis captures the capital city's culture by creating shareable imagery—emojis—for locals. Emojis, such as smiley faces or a thumbs-up, are a form of communication consisting of graphics located in the keyboard of a smartphone's text message application.

Springfield Emojis features local ads, events, food, landmarks, Lincoln, memes, news and more. The company developed an app called SPFLD Emojis, which adds the local emojis to a user's smartphone keyboard.

Tim Wallin, co-owner of Springfield Emojis, says his vision for the application began when he observed larger chains, such as Starbucks and Burger King, launching emoji keyboards to support their brands. He says the large chains simply missed the mark.

"They supplied imagery to communicate their brand, but it wasn't a functional thing to have a keyboard for every brand you like," he said. "It's a whole lot more functional to have a keyboard for a community you live in."

Springfield Emojis features several advertising components for businesses, which include custom

emojis, business directory listings and even a boost from the 217 Problems Facebook page. Pricing ranges from \$75 a week to \$350 a month. Wallin says that his ads use wit to make things interesting and relevant.

"The best ads are the ones that apply current events to a brand," he said, recalling a recent example in which his company created an image for Knights Action Park to help the park recover from false claims of water contamination. "If you don't make it fun, funny or shareable, then people won't really mess with it."

Similar to creating humorous content that relates to an entire community, 217 Problems—an area-code-centric social media heavy hitter—provides multi-dimensional content that is advertiser friendly. Brian Berns, creator of 217 Problems, emphasizes area code stereotypes and drives conversation on several social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, that provide relatability to his audience.

"You can talk about your first car, your first kiss, or the pothole on Sixth Street," Berns said. "It focuses on what people in the 217 are thinking about."

Berns says he simply wanted to create a place for people to talk about the stereotypes of the 217 area code, with the hope of increasing positivity.



Brian Berns

PHOTOS / PATRICK YEAGLE



Tim Wallin

"I started 217 Problems and focused on old stereotypes in the community," he said. "Content-wise, I really started with things that were every day that were not verbalized."

A quick scroll through the 217 Problems Facebook page reveals a gold mine of relatable content for locals. Posts range from thought-provoking questions, such as "217 Late Night," images of horseshoes, humorous photos of odd encounters within the area code, and even advertisements with well-received audience engagement.

On average, the page reaches 700,000 weekly views, but within the last week, it received one million views. When asked how his advertisements grab the attention of his audience, also known as the "minions,"

Berns says the key is subtle advertising.

"You have to be real with people and tap into what they're feeling," he said. "A picture of a horseshoe with two words works better than a post with 40 words. Subtle advertising gets the message across, but it's not as blatant. You have to be sneaky."

Wallin and Berns agree that the success of their businesses requires that they relate to their audiences. That relationship involves a balance between regular content, subtle advertising and an engaged audience.

"People really open up," Berns said. "It's about finding ways to make people think for a second and want to answer because they [the questions] are fun, interesting and relatable. If you can have a little fun and keep people interested, then you're golden." ♦



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1	CDS Office Technologies 612 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	800-367-1508 217-753=4867 cdsofficetch.com Sales@cdsot.com	Jay and Mark Watson	65	Remote managed IT network service provider, wireless networks, public safety equipment, Cloud data storage, servers, voice communications, high-def video conferencing, personal computers/laptops, digital signage, video surveillance, document/print management, copiers/ printers/scanners and license plate recognition systems.	Panasonic, Lenovo, Konica Minolta, Lexmark, Sharp, Samsung, HP, Aruba, Barracuda, Asus, ShoreTel, Brother, Zebra, Havis, Gamber Johnson, Antenna Plus, Sierra Wireless, Cybernetics, Decatur Electronics, Garmin, Kaspersky, Lind Electronics, Microsoft	1971
2	SEA Group, Inc. 3901 Pintail Drive, Suite A Springfield, IL 62711	217-523-1717 seagrp.com info@seagrp.com	Joe Marchizza, Sean Brown	24	Specializing in voice/video telecommunications, video collaboration, telepresence design and support, Polycom IP phones; in addition, we offer IP Video Security Solutions (including License Plate Recognition), nurse call, access control and low voltage infrastructure.	Polycom, Mitel, CommScope, Axis, Genetec, Siemens, Ruckus	1984
3	AmeriCall Communications, Inc. 447 N. Walnut Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-2255 217-522=2257 americallinc.com mdenney@americallinc.com	Gene Dinardo, Melanie Patton, Joe Ushman	15	Phone systems, networking, security, structured cabling, fiber optics, hosted solutions.	NEC, Adtran, GEETEC, Hikvision, Axis, Samsung, Arecont, Speco	2001
3	Hanson Information Systems, Inc. 2433 W. White Oaks Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-726-2400 217-726=3239 hansoninfosys.com info@hansoninfosys.com	Karen Pletsch – President, Raj Mohanty – Director of Operations	15	Cloud computing and application hosting, IT security solutions/ disaster recovery and business continuity, network design and installation, hosted exchange email solutions, website design and development, web hosting, offsite backup services, equipment procurement, IP and private network services.	Dell, HP, FortiGate, SonicWALL, Adtran, Plycom and Lynksys	1997
4	Windstream 739 South Fifth Street, Suite 300 Springfield, IL 62703	217-241-9965 217-241=9969 windstreambusiness.com al.gietl@windstream.com	Al Gietl - Senior Account Executive	10	Enterprise-class data, voice, network and cloud solutions empowering businesses with reliable, scalable secure network solutions. Services provided include SDWAN, MPLS, hosted exchange, UCaaS Cloud Computing, DRAAS along with data and voice management equipment. Complete network design with diverse business continuity and disaster recovery services is our specialty.	Allworx, Mitel, Avaya and Cisco	1940
5	MCS 2657 W. Lawrence Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-9900 217-698=9902 thinkMCS.com info@thinkmcs.com	Jesse Coultas	9	Business IT support, websites, web development, fiber internet service, phones, disaster recovery, data center services and IT product sales.	HP, Acer, Lenovo, Dell, Cisco, Barracuda Networks, Microsoft, Veeam, Nagios, Polycom, AT&T, Comcast and Windstream	2003
6	Mamcomm 1 Services Inc. 176 Archer Avenue Springfield, IL 62704	217-522-8942 217-522=8948 mamcomm@mamcomm1.com	Michael A. Milburn	8	Low voltage contractor providing services for any size commercial, institutional or industrial project, including complete design-build, custom network design, installation, testing, warranting and troubleshooting of structured cabling, fiber optic cabling, nurse call, wireless access networks, video camera surveillance, security/card access, high-def video solutions, disaster recovery and phone systems.	APC, Allworx Avaya, CommScope, Hubble, Panduit, Polycom, Siemon, Uniprise	1993
7	GoWeb1 1028 South Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62704	217-241-8554 goweb1.com theteam@goweb1.com	Mark Roberts, III	7	Website and software development, SaaS provider, graphic design, website hosting, domain name registration management, email/messaging/voice solutions.	Alerts Made Easy, SMS Elephant (soon to be TextClubs.com), GoWeb1 Professional Services, GoWeb1 DIYG Self-Service	2005
8	Thirdwave Data/Comm Inc. 550 North Street, Suite 3 Springfield, IL 62704	217-544-4720 217-544=4758 thridwavedata.com sales@thirdwavedata.com	Brian McLean	6	Sales, service and support of all telecommunications needs.	Avaya, Nortel	2002
8	Novanis IT Solutions 3161 West White Oaks Dr., Suite 100 Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-0999 217-698=1087 novanis.com sales@novanis.com	Walter Meek	6	Network infrastructure, wired and wireless networks, servers, desktops, cybersecurity software, software implementation, implementation services, technology consulting.	Hewlett Packard, Lenovo, DELL,Ruckus, Cisco, Aerohive, Lenovo, Adobe, Microsoft Surface, Microsoft Productivity Software, SonicWall, Fortinet, F5, McAfee, VmWare, Symantec	1982
9	Heart Technologies 1831 S. 11th Street Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-3100 heart.net sfeipel@heart.net	Sheila Feipel	5	Complete IT networking, phone systems, hosted voice, structured cabling, fiber optics, building wireless, nurse call/patient wandering, video surveillance, access control, fire and intrusion detection.	Mitel, NEC, Heart, Cloud hosted voice, Cisco voice	1988
10	Springtel, Inc. 6900 Preston Dr. Springfield, IL 62711	800-995-7769 217-241-6001 springtel.net dan@springtel.net	Neal E. Miller	3	Hosted phone system solution including unified communications. Local, long-distance and toll-free voice services.	N/A	2009

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Seven cybersecurity recommendations for small businesses

BY MICHAEL KOKAL

Cybersecurity is a growing concern for businesses at all levels. The potential threats are numerous, and a successful attack can cripple or even destroy a small business.

Darrell Fortae, owner of Everlast Software, LLC. in Springfield, teaches community-based cybersecurity seminars at Lincoln Land's Capital City Training Center. Here are his seven recommendations for small businesses seeking to stay safe in the digital realm.



Focus on passwords.

Perhaps the easiest and most effective precaution you and your employees can take is to pay attention to your passwords. Regularly change them. Don't use the same password for any two accounts, and consider using a secure, offline password manager to keep track of your various passwords.

Pay special attention to selecting a password. Fortae recommends passwords that are at least ten characters in length, but for important work and financial information, he recommends passwords as long as 16 characters.

Another consideration in selecting a password is not using something which can be found in a dictionary. One of the most common decoding programs used by hackers is a "brute force" search for passwords found in the dictionary. Fortae recommends using phrases, as opposed to words, and to include a couple of special characters in the middle of the words. For example, the password "friedgreentomatoes" would not be found in a dictionary. Adding special characters ("fried77gre@en5tomatoes" or "fri!ed24green7tomatoes" makes it even harder for a hacker to decode. The longer the password, the more difficult it is for a computer algorithm to break.



Update software and patches.

Make sure that your computer and network use the latest versions of all computer software, and that all of your security

patches or system upgrades are up to date. Hackers are continually finding computer software vulnerabilities, especially those based on Windows. Hackers may discover a vulnerability, - a so-called "zero-day exploit" - which is not publicly reported or announced before becoming active. That may leave software vendors with "zero days" in which to create patches or advise workarounds to prevent the exploit.

To fix the vulnerability, software vendors and developers will attempt to develop patches and upgrades, making them available as they are developed. Keeping all security patches and system updates up to date, though not perfect, provides a defense to the "zero-day" exploit.



Train your employees to recognize malware.

An untrained employee can thwart even the best computer defenses. Your business can have the most effective firewall on the market, but if employees are not trained to recognize a potential "spear-phishing" attack or malware, your network can be breached.

A phishing attack involves a malicious email sent to any random email account. However, spear-phishing is a more sophisticated means of attacking your computer because these emails are designed to look like they came from someone the recipient knows and trusts, such as a colleague, business manager, or human resources department. They can include a subject line or content that is specifically tailored to the victim's known interest or industry. If the user clicks on the malicious attachment in the email or visits a malicious website linked to the email, it may allow a criminal hacker to access that computer or the entire network.

Spear-phishing attacks are becoming more and more sophisticated. Fortae recommends training your employees with mock-simulated spear-phishing attacks to help employees recognize suspicious emails. Additionally, outside vendors may provide classroom teaching or even software that simulates phishing attacks, which can be helpful in providing "just-in-time" training messages to individuals who fail to recognize the mock attack.



Train your employees not to use public Wi-Fi networks.

Public Wi-Fi networks are inherently vulnerable to hackers. Anyone with a cheap wireless router or a device called a "Wi-Fi pineapple" can set up a Wi-Fi network. Hackers sometimes use this tactic to ensnare careless users and trick them into thinking they're connecting to legitimate access points. In order to further conceal their ruse, hackers may impersonate the names of known networks, such as those belonging to your local Starbucks or McDonald's. This type of attack is called the "evil twin." If an employee logs into the "fake" Wi-Fi server, it may allow a hacker to mount what is called a "man in the middle" attack, which allows the hacker to inspect the data flow between the victim and any resources they are accessing on the web or any computer that they are networked with.

Keep in mind that server administrators can capture unencrypted data being sent on even legitimate Wi-Fi networks.



Train your employees not to use USB devices from unknown sources.

Although USB flash drives are extremely useful for transferring data, they present substantial security risks if they come from unknown sources. Employees using USB drives at home and then plugging them back into the computer network at work is also a security concern.

USB devices can contain infected files that execute and spread malware when opened. For example, the Stuxnet worm which affected Iran's nuclear facilities was allegedly deployed on a USB device. USB devices can also be booby-trapped to emulate a keyboard and take over a Windows-based computer by sending keystrokes as soon as they are plugged in.



Back up critical system data.

Ransomware is a form of cyber mal-

ware based on encryption software that demands payment (ransom) to undo the damage. When the network is affected, the malware typically encrypts all data files, rendering them useless until the ransom is paid. According to Fortae, backing up your critical data remains the best recovery option to survive a ransomware attack.

Backups are best protected when they are maintained offline from the production environment because ransomware viruses can corrupt backup copies. Snapshots and replication copies can also be vulnerable to a time delayed ransomware attack. That means synchronized cloud backups are not good enough. In addition, backups should contain a complete, recoverable copy of not just data, but the entire server or network environment. A backup should be sequenced over many days, be a complete image and be located off site.



Anti-virus programs are ineffective.

Anti-virus software programs are generally ineffective and slow down your computer. This is because anti-virus software has a poor detection rate. The best anti-virus software only detects about 40 to 45 percent of viruses and malware. When an anti-virus program is operating, your computer may also become significantly slower - especially if you have real-time scanning enabled.

Before opening any file obtained from the Internet (email, website, etc.), Fortae recommends processing it through virustotal.com, a free online service from Google which analyzes files and URLs, enabling the identification of viruses, worms, Trojans, and other kinds of malicious content detected by anti-virus engines and website scanners.

These seven recommendations can't guarantee your company's cybersecurity, but they will go a long way toward helping you avoid the most common pitfalls. Taking these precautions is worth the effort to protect what you have built.

Michael Kokal is a certified privacy information professional (CIPP/US) and licensed intellectual property attorney. He practices law at the Springfield office of Heyl Royster where he is on the firm's cybersecurity committee. ♦



An architectural rendering by Steckel-Parker Architects, Inc., which depicts the LRS expansion in Springfield.

PHOTO / COURTESY OF LRS

LRS expanding Springfield headquarters

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Levi, Ray and Shoup, Inc. started in 1979 as a local computer consulting company. Since then, it has grown into a global information technology provider, employing 675 people on four continents. Now, the company is expanding further by growing its international headquarters located in Springfield. Until recently, the LRS campus on West Monroe Street consisted of eight buildings. Two of those buildings have already been demolished and another two will be torn down later. Those four buildings, which totaled around 40,000 square feet, were about 40 years old and were disconnected from the newer LRS main office. Ryan Levi, LRS vice president and son of co-founder Dick Levi,

says they no longer met the needs of the growing technology company, so they will be replaced with a new, larger building encompassing about 60,000 square feet. The new building will feature two floors of offices, an 84-seat auditorium, a learning center, two computer labs, and several conference rooms and support spaces. A 101,000-square-foot parking garage will be built below the offices, with a sky bridge connecting the offices to the LRS main building. Levi says the new office will allow LRS to retain its existing 310 employees in Springfield and add an estimated 50 new employees over the next three years. He says the new building, which was designed to match the style of the company's existing buildings, will house LRS' divisions of enterprise output management, web services and IT solutions.

In addition to the new building, LRS is planning an open space of about one acre for employees to use during breaks. It may even include paths for walking or jogging. The LRS expansion was made possible by what's known as an enterprise zone. Under state law, enterprise zones provide certain tax incentives meant to spur business growth. There are five possible incentive types, such as an exemption on the state utility tax for electricity and natural gas. In February, the Springfield City Council voted to expand the existing Springfield-Sangamon County Enterprise Zone to encompass the LRS campus and Solomon Colors, Inc., a brick pigment manufacturer on Springfield's far north side. Final approval from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity came in XXX. The expansion of the enterprise zone allows LRS a sales tax exemption

on the materials used to build its new office and parking garage. It also offers LRS a temporary freeze of its property taxes for the eligible land, although Ryan Levi says that's only a small portion of the overall benefit provided by the enterprise zone. LRS estimates the project cost at between \$20 and \$25 million. With two buildings already demolished and site preparation under way, construction is estimated to take 18 months and finish in the winter of 2018. The contractors on the project are O'Shea Builders, E.L. Pruitt Co. and B&B Electric, Inc. Levi says it has been important to LRS to remain in Springfield. "It's mainly a pride thing," he said. "This is our hometown. We're very proud of what we've built here, and we like to keep it in the community whenever possible." ♦



6th Annual Women's Symposium
Thursday, September 7, 2017
Crowne Plaza, Springfield

This empowering full-day event will allow attendees to expand their professional and personal competencies and make relevant connections through networking. The registration fee includes admission to a variety of insightful educational sessions, exhibits, and keynote speaker Allison Massari, who teaches "how to ignite that inner fire of perseverance - to handle the unexpected, to innovate and successfully navigate changes." Go to allison-massari.com for more information about this year's keynote speaker.

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PHOTO / ISTOCK

New Internet tech promises reliability, security

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Sometimes, a simple idea can change an entire landscape.

If the experts are right, a new Internet technology called SD-WAN may be one of those ideas, and it could mean big improvements in connectivity for businesses.

SD-WAN stands for “software-defined network wide-area network.” The underlying technology combines two concepts which are themselves important for businesses.

In the past, businesses have typically relied on vendor-specific IT hardware to both relay data and control where it is sent. In a newer software-defined network, the data routing function is separated from the data itself, which allows for far greater control and efficiency. It’s often described metaphorically as the difference between a highway full of drivers stuck on the same path and an omniscient dispatcher rerouting

drivers to avoid delays.

The second half of SD-WAN is the wide-area network, a relatively old concept in which data is transmitted between locations separated by geography. For example, if one bank location with its computers interconnected is a “local area network” or LAN, then multiple banks connected together as one would be a WAN. Besides introducing major security challenges, maintaining a WAN means dealing with potentially slow connections or outages at some sites.

Enter the SD-WAN. It allows businesses and other users to combine multiple Internet connections from different providers into a single network that spans multiple locations. In addition to wired connections, SD-WAN can take advantage of mobile data connections.

Al Gietl, senior account executive at network communications provider Windstream in Springfield, says his company deployed its first Springfield SD-WAN in June, and he expects the technology to catch

on quickly in Springfield and around the globe.

Part of the projected explosion in SD-WAN usage is driven by the move toward “cloud” services, according to Gietl. As more businesses switch to centralized computing and storage, SD-WAN offers a way to cut through complex hardware setups at multiple locations, while also encrypting all traffic automatically.

Gietl says SD-WANs can run on non-proprietary hardware, meaning users aren’t stuck forever with one provider after buying that provider’s own brand of equipment. While SD-WAN does require a dedicated machine to run the software at each location in the network, those “boxes” are simply integrated with the systems already in place, creating what administrators refer to as an “overlay.”

“It’s cost-effective because it uses available hardware,” Gietl said.

Applications for SD-WANs include banks, retail chains, medical facilities, government agencies and

more. Gietl says the technology may be particularly useful for companies using voice-over-IP technology for phone service. He explains that many connections have a fast download speed but a slower upload speed, meaning voices sent over those connections may drop or flutter due to inadequate bandwidth. An SD-WAN would allow an administrator to prioritize voice data over other network traffic, ensuring better call quality.

The most attractive benefit, Gietl says, is reliability. He points to a recent Midwest storm which knocked out some Internet connections. Gietl says one customer with an SD-WAN had two connections down after the storm but was able to stay online using a third connection.

“You have to plan for that one day when your line goes down,” Gietl said. “That’s just the nature of the beast in our industry. As bandwidth become cheaper and cheaper, it’s important to take advantage of that diversity.” ♦



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Prof. Matthew Shaver with students Jeremie Bailey and Amelia Laferty, whose game, Protect The Pizza, was developed in the program.

PHOTO/COURTESY OF JEREMIE BAILEY

Video game program turns a hobby into a career

BY ERIC WOODS

For Matthew Shaver, learning about computers and computer languages was just a hobby as he worked toward a degree in elementary education at Drury University.

"I used to program entertainment games and bring them to class," he said.

His professors took notice, as did the dean of Missouri State University, who saw Shaver's talent and urged him to continue honing his computer skills in graduate school.

Today, Shaver is professor of digital media at Lincoln Land Community College and the lone professor in the school's popular Computer Gaming program.

Shaver was hired at Lincoln Land in 1999 to start a web design program. He initially taught classes on DOS and Windows, which evolved to include courses on multimedia and film production. As the dot-com bubble ended, Shaver wanted to look at how the college could continue innovation.

"We took on 3-D at that point," he said, referring to three-dimensional modeling. "I told the dean, we can teach this in a classroom."

Eventually, a group of advisors began meeting and wondered why the college wasn't teaching video games and game design. Shaver decided to investigate but ran into the problem of cost.

"We tabled the idea until 2007 when Steve Jobs introduced the iPhone," Shaver said. "And I wanted to know what Apple was providing for software."

Shaver actually worked for the multinational technology giant for more than four years.

About a year after the iPhone's introduction, a student walked into Shaver's office and said he wanted to design video games. In 2009, the first class was offered.

"I went to the dean and said that I think we can create a class for this," Shaver said.

What started out as one class with a single iPad has blossomed into a complete degree program as well as several certificate programs.

"Word on the street is that the game design class is what you want to take," said Shaver, who admits that he gets people with various backgrounds, from artists to those with no coding experience at all. "My job is to bring everyone

together. They choose their own teams, and the goal of the class is to work together to create one game for the iPad."

Currently, students can earn an associate's degree in digital media design from Lincoln Land, which will transfer to a four-year college or university. Shaver encourages his students to transfer to Peoria's Bradley University for further study once they earn their degree at Lincoln Land.

"I want to offer students the same experience without having to go to the coast," he said.

The program brings in students from many backgrounds, Shaver says. From conception artists to animation artists, they all play a role in creating video games. Also, Shaver teaches about information-based applications, so it is not only video game skills that are needed.

"I want to break the myth that all designers just sit around and hack out code all day long," he said. "That is not how it works."

Hundreds of hours go into the development of a game, and to showcase the end result, Shaver came up with a video game design tournament in 2016.

"I told the dean we were having this tournament and we needed prizes," he said. "I was just shooting from the hip. I didn't know how it would go."

The tournament was open to the public and involved seven teams. More than 500 votes were cast for the various competitors.

"There were some great games and great students going through this," Shaver said.

Prizes for the winners included tools which would help the students in their design careers, such as graphics tablets.

This year's tournament included both entry-level and advanced classes, totaling 16 teams. It was an even bigger event than last year, garnering more than 900 votes.

"It was shoulder-to-shoulder all day long, and the ceremony at the end was standing room only," Shaver said.

The success of the first two years has prompted a third annual tournament scheduled for April 18 of next year, and Shaver is looking for sponsors.

"We want to actively engage in the Springfield community and invite them to come on board," he said. "It is not about playing a video game, but rather creating a game and the process that comes together to produce that game." ♦



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MEDICAL NEWS

St. John's breaks ground on new outpatient center for women and children

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

HSHS St. John's Hospital broke ground for a new outpatient center recently.

To be located at 400 N. Ninth St., across from the existing hospital, the new facility will focus on care for women and children.

"Providing access, convenience and the best possible care for our patients has been at the forefront of our minds in this planning process," said Charles Lucore, president and CEO of St. John's. "We want to provide an optimal outpatient environment for women and children to receive care and physicians to practice as we carry on the mission of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis."

The \$48.4-million project will include a four-story facility with 85,000 square feet of space housing a lab and pharmacy, pediatric rehabilitation, pediatric cardiology

services, mammography and other imaging tests, pediatric orthopedics and general surgery, maternal-fetal medicine, a pediatric multi-specialty clinic, obstetrics and gynecology. A skybridge across Ninth Street will connect the new building with the existing St. John's Children's Hospital, and a new parking garage will also be built on the site.

The new facility will offer patients access to providers from SIU Medicine, HSHS Medical Group and St. John's Hospital.

"This facility will allow our physicians to coordinate in-patient and out-patient specialty care and primary care for women and children in a convenient location to ensure all aspects of care are done effectively and efficiently," said Dr. Jerry Kruse, dean of SIU School of Medicine and CEO of SIU Medicine.

A café and healing garden are also part of the design. Because the building will sit



An architectural rendering shows HSHS St. John's Hospital new outpatient center.

ILLUSTRATION / KAHLER SLATER

adjacent to the site of homes razed during Springfield's 1908 race riot, the design of the healing garden will incorporate elements to memorialize that history.

"We are also planning a formal remembrance inside the building to highlight the importance of the site that remains to the

south of the site and the HSHS Sisters' role in the healing process for the victims and the community," said Dr. E.J. Kuiper, president and CEO of HSHS Central Illinois Division.

The project is slated for completion in August 2018.

Springfield hospitals among "Most Wired" in US



Memorial Health System and Hospital Sisters Health System in Springfield were both recognized this month as "Most Wired" in a nationwide survey conducted by Hospitals & Health Networks, a publication of the American Hospital Association.

The survey examines how hospitals use technology to become more efficient, provide better care and improve the patient experience, among other criteria. Researchers looked at nearly 700 participants representing about 2,160 hospitals, choosing 460 hospitals or hospital systems nationwide for the honor. Of those, 29 were in Illinois.

Memorial Medical Center in Springfield was one of three hospitals within Memorial Health System to receive the award. The others were Abraham Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Lincoln and Taylorville Memorial Hospital.

"There are many ways in which information technology plays a crucial role in healthcare, from ensuring that patient records are secure to providing analytical tools for physicians and nurses," said Dr. David Graham, senior vice president and chief information officer for Memorial Health System. "We're honored that

three of our affiliates have been recognized among the best in the nation for their success in this field."

Hospital Sisters Health System operates HSHS St. John's Hospital in Springfield, as well as a network of other hospitals and clinics across Illinois and Wisconsin.

"Our dedicated and knowledgeable IT team at HSHS works tirelessly to bring the most advanced technology to our hospitals and clinics for our patients," said Mary Starmann-Harrison, HSHS president and CEO. "We have successfully integrated technology into every part of our health system, from patient care to our administrative operations. I'm extremely proud of our IT team and for this recognition that they have deservedly earned."

In addition to recognizing specific hospitals and health systems, the survey documented technology trends in healthcare, such as use of prescription renewal requests by smartphone, virtual physician visits, and patient contributions to electronic health records.

Details and results of the annual survey are available at hhnmag.com/mostwired.



PHOTO / ISTOCK

Don't get stumped by tree law

BY THOMAS C. PAVLIK JR.

With all of the recent weather that has stormed through Springfield, I can't help but notice piles of downed trees and limbs throughout my neighborhood. The City of Springfield even decided to extend its free branch pick-up due to the recent storms. But have you ever stopped to wonder about the legal implications if your tree falls on your neighbor's house? Or when the limbs of a neighbor's tree become a nuisance in your own yard? If you haven't, the storm season is a good time to find out.

Let's first talk about who owns a tree. A tree is owned by whoever owns the location where the tree trunk exits the ground. This holds true even if the vast majority of the tree's canopy extends over neighboring property. It also holds true even if most of the roots are located on adjoining property and draw water and nourishment from that property.

Just because you own a tree doesn't mean that you have complete and unfettered control of the tree. If your tree's branches and limbs extend over adjoining property, that property owner has the right to prune the branches (and roots) right up to the property line. It's a little bit like joint custody, except that you, as the tree's owner, can't be forced to pay the pruning expenses. The only exception to a neighbor's right to prune up to the property line is when that pruning will cause "serious harm" to the tree. For example, if trimming the roots would cause the tree to die (or fall over), that conduct would be prohibited. It's a very fact-specific determination. The well-advised owner should check with his or her insurance agent before engaging in any aggressive tree or root trimming to make sure that there's coverage.

Just like in most other areas of the law, with ownership comes responsibility. So if a tree trunk exits the ground on your property, you are now responsible for maintaining that tree. Under certain circumstances, you can also be held liable for damage caused by the tree.

In our rural and agrarian past, property owners were immune from liability for property conditions of "purely natural origin, such as a tree." But, as Illinois became a more urban setting, the law began to recognize that it was no longer very much of a burden for a small property owner to inspect his or her property in order to take reasonable precautions against dangerous natural conditions such as dead limbs or dying trees. Said another way, the typical home owner is charged with taking reasonable steps to inspect trees and to trim dead branches, or even to take down a dying tree that might fall on a neighbor's house.

When deciding issues of liability, the courts look at the nature of the property and locality (e.g. urban or rural), the seriousness of the danger, and

the ease or difficulty of fixing the problem. For example, a single dead branch that could be easily cut down in the Washington Park area may create more liability than one dead tree out of hundreds on a multi-acre parcel of land.

If you're really paying attention, you should be wondering how you might maintain a tree when a substantial portion is accessible only from adjoining property. Well, the law says that a tree owner may enter adjoining property to fix a dangerous condition — such as removing an obviously dead branch.

What if you're a neighbor and you spy a dead branch hanging over your breakfast room? Then you'd be well advised to notify your neighbor (perhaps even in writing) so as to put him or her on notice of the condition.

What if your neighbor doesn't do anything to remedy the situation? Then you're entitled to self-help — certainly up to the property line and perhaps even past the property line, if necessary, for safety reasons. As with many situations in the law, the standard is generally one of reasonableness; if there's imminent harm of a tree or limb falling, it's more likely that you can enter your neighbor's property to fix the problem. If the danger is remote, then it's much less likely that you can take such action.

However, keep in mind that if you are found to have intentionally damaged a tree without justification, you can be held liable for triple damages. Damages for most decorative trees may not cover the actual value for a mature substitute tree, but should be enough for a reasonable substitute with some money left over. So act wisely before taking potentially rash action. The same rules apply if someone — perhaps a negligent driver who plows into your yard — damages one of your trees.

What about trees located in right-of-ways or easements granted to utilities? What about the aggressive trimming and pruning sometimes engaged in by those utilities? First, under most circumstances you're entitled to some notice by the utility. Second, the trimming has to conform to certain standards — but those standards are fairly generous and, in general, authorize what most of us would view as heavy-handed pruning. Essentially, there's not much you can do.

As far as trees not within an easement or right of way, it's the homeowner's responsibility to trim them so that they don't interfere with power or phone lines.

Trees, then, can be the subject of a myriad of legal issues. Coupled with potential bad relations between neighbors, there's lots of fodder for a fight. And the best way to avoid those fights is to know the law and act reasonably. ♦

Thomas C. Pavlik Jr. is an attorney at Delano Law Offices, LLC.

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Professional Women's Calendar of Events

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

Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL)

IWIL will hold a luncheon on Thursday, August 17 at the Sangamo Club from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. IWIL promotes professionalism and develops members' leadership and management abilities through education, mentoring, networking, participation, encouragement, and support, as well as community involvement. RSVP by emailing registration@iwil.biz or online at www.iwil.biz.

Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois (WE-CI)

WE-CI will hold a luncheon on Wednesday, August 9 at the Sangamo Club from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Margaret Ann Jessup will speak on the topic, "Being Daring." Our monthly meetings are designed to promote networking and feature speakers with topics relevant to women in business today. For more information or to register, visit www.we-ci.org.

Association for Women in Communications (AWC)

AWC members earn free admission to national webinars, receive reduced prices for luncheons and programs, job updates, member resources and opportunities to serve on the local and/or national board and develop leadership skills. The local chapter will be holding a 40th anniversary celebration in the fall. For more information, visit www.awcspringfield.org.



To have your event added to the Women's Calendar of Events, please email your information to info@springfieldbusinessjournal.com



Introducing new businesses

**See full list online at springfieldbusinessjournal.com*

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1337 N. Rutledge St.
416-0165

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Sisters of Salvation

2717 Granada Court
679-3231

Owner: LaTaushia Strayhorn

Vanessa's Social Mobile Internet Office

2060 N. Fifth St.
503-0466

Owner: Vanessa Ruzic

Classy & Sassy Designs by Jody

220 Fairway Dr., Unit 6, Chatham
685-5959

Owner: Jody Womack

AMS Hair Studio

917 Clocktower Drive Ste. 140
691-0689

Owner: Amy Sunley

Bardo Vending

521 Mallard Dr., Chatham
483-7498

Owner: Bob O'Donnell

High-Tech Wireless

1201 N. Ninth St.
330-461-0291

Owner: Ameenuddin Mohammed

Zenko Fightwear

422 Goldenrod Dr., Chatham
481-6767

Owners: Austin Lane Plummer, Christy Marshall

Pawfection

14 Somerset, Sherman
685-0918

Owner: Gina Allen

North Tucker Wireless

310 South Grand Ave. East
679-2448

Owner: Marashli Morad

Small Axe Market Gardens

1400 N. Hill St.
299-4578

Owner: August Jones

BNM Performance Fab

1034 N. Amos Ave.
836-4094

Owner: Evan Carpenter

Elegance Natural Hair Care

2056 Skipton Rd.
816-8892

Owner: Denika D. Johnson

180 Fitness

427 E. Monroe St., Ste 200C
219-552-2040

Owner: Deidra Pearl

Hamilton Lawn Care

1401 N. Third St., Lot 50, Riverton
899-0785

Owner: Jeremy S. Hamilton

Renovate

3028 Dunwich Ave.
572-1514

Owner: Keith A. Barden

11th St. Garage

2715 S. 11th St.
899-5653

Owners: Donald J. Padget, Justin L. Armstead

LoyalTee Clothing

3037 E. Linden Ave.
502-6900

Owners: Jackira Alexander, Ebony Swope

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381-8341

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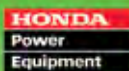
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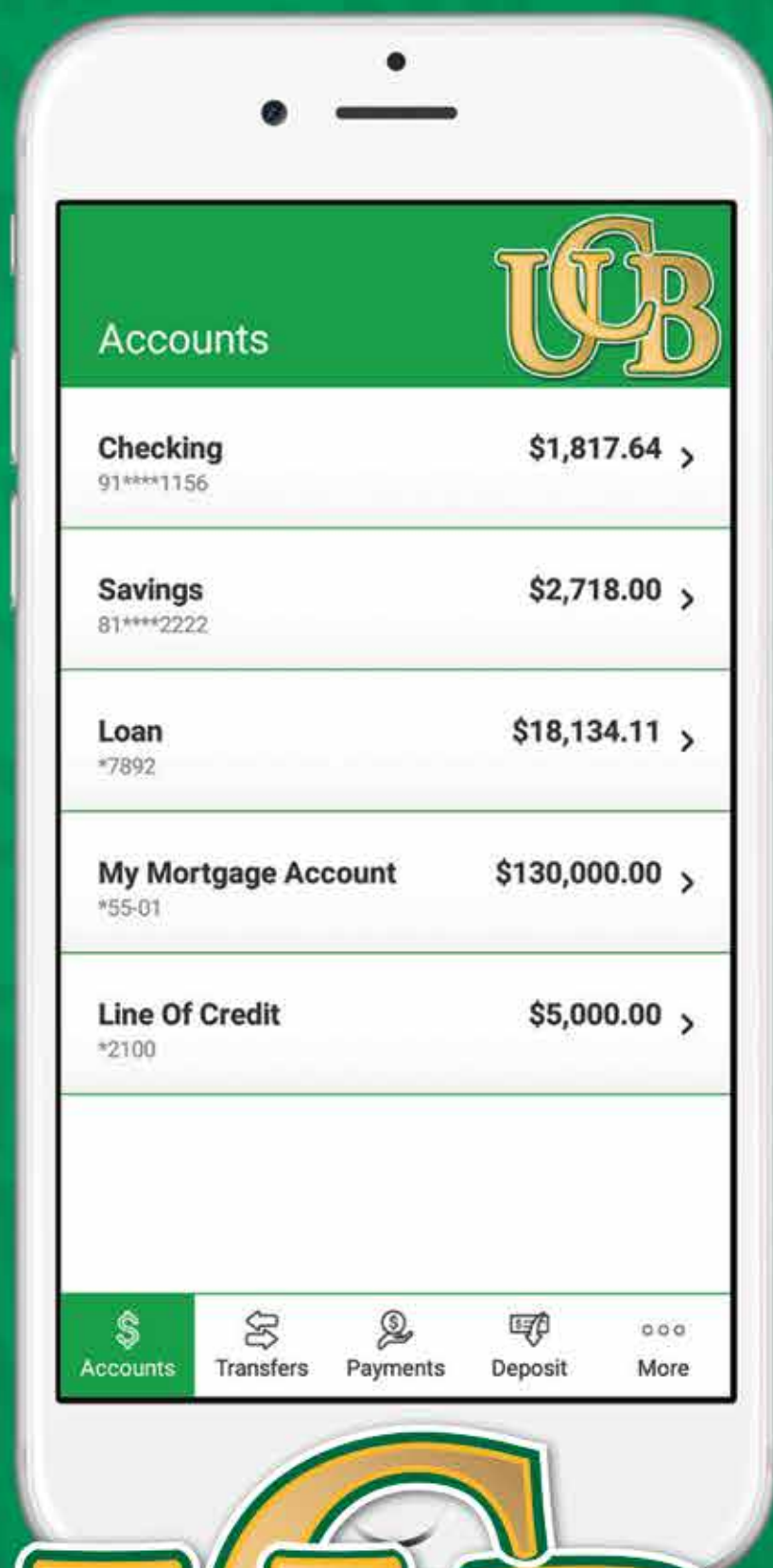
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