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Cards showing different strains of marijuana

PHOTO / COURTESY OF MARIBIS

Substitute medical marijuana for opioids, supporters say

BY MONICA STABILE

Supporters of medical cannabis hope to expand the number of conditions currently covered under Illinois law to help reduce the number of people who overdose on opioid drugs.

There were more fatalities in Illinois from opioid drug overdoses than from homicides or car accidents in 2014, according to the latest data from the state's Department of Public Health.

"The patients fall into this death spiral of taking more and more [opiates]," said Dr. Charles Bush-Joseph, an orthopedic surgeon from Chicago who testified at a recent legislative hearing in Springfield. "When patients finally run out of gas, then they go get a \$10 dose of heroin, which is cheaper than an OxyContin pill."

The U.S Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General reported that more people died of overdoses in 2014 nationwide compared to any previous year on record. The study found that opioids were involved in 60 percent of all drug overdose deaths, totaling 29,000 people.

Opioids prescribed by doctors to alleviate pain are usually safe when taken for a short amount of time, but they can be addictive because they produce a euphoric feeling that can lead to abuse, overdose and death. Commonly abused opiates are OxyContin, Vicodin, codeine, morphine, fentanyl and heroin.

A patient's body can begin to tolerate opioids between 10 to 14 days, and there are two ways patients can become addicted, Bush-Joseph explains. The opioid receptors in the brain spur production of the feel-good hormone dopamine, but tolerance increases and requires higher levels of the drug to activate the same amount of pain relief. Alternatively, after four to six weeks of opioid use, the liver begins to metabolize the drug more quickly, meaning the drug is flushed out of the body faster; that leads to the patient

needing opiates at an increasing rate.

Supporters of medical cannabis, which is now legal in 29 states, say that the plant can help treat medical conditions and can lead to fewer people being dependent on and addicted to opioids, resulting in fewer overdose deaths.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration hasn't approved marijuana for medicinal use, and it remains illegal at the federal

abuse treatment programs for prescription opioid use. NIDA noted that a reduction in overdose deaths was greater in states with active medical cannabis dispensaries, not just states with legalized medical marijuana laws.

Another study done by the American Medical Association found that states with medical cannabis laws had a lower percentage of opioid overdose mortality

overdose.

"People with unresolved, non-fatal conditions would be good candidates for medical marijuana since they would be much better handled on medical cannabis, rather than keeping them on lifelong opiates," Bush-Joseph said.

Some post-operative solutions such as acupuncture don't always work, he said, leaving people whose debilitating condition isn't eligible for medical cannabis to fall through the cracks.

In Illinois, there are 41 medical conditions for which patients can be eligible to receive a medical cannabis registration card. To obtain the card, a physician must diagnose a patient with one or more of the qualifying conditions that include cancer, Crohn's disease and multiple sclerosis, to name a few.

Bret Bender, general manager of Maribis Springfield, a medical cannabis dispensary, works with patients who shop for medical cannabis to figure out which product would be the best fit to treat their medical symptoms. There are different types of products available that contain chemicals within the plant called cannabinoids, including hemp oil, tinctures and topicals. People may react differently to the cannabinoids, so it's hard to say a particular strain works well for everyone with a certain condition, Bender explained.

"They kind of have to go through their own period of self-discovery," he said.

Bender supports medical cannabis as an alternative treatment to prescription opioids because it doesn't result in physical addiction. He hopes that more people, especially at the federal level, come to see marijuana as a useful means to treat medical conditions.

"The real gateway drugs are the opiates that people are being prescribed everyday," Bender said. "Get people access to it, instead of forcing people to take highly addictive, dangerous and awful opiates." ♦



Maribis opened on Springfield's north side earlier this year

PHOTO / COURTESY OF MARIBIS

level. However, there are two FDA-approved medications available in pill form that contain chemicals from cannabis intended to treat a range of medical conditions and symptoms.

Studies conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) have shown that states with medical cannabis programs have had fewer overdose deaths from prescription opioids, fewer opioid prescriptions, lower prescription opioid use for non-medical conditions and a reduced number of people in substance

rates annually.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that 75 percent of new heroin users abused prescription opioids before using heroin. In addition, more than 1,000 people each day are treated at hospital emergency rooms for using prescription opioids incorrectly.

Bush-Joseph said he became involved with medical cannabis to use it as a potential antidote to curb the number of people addicted to opioids and hopefully lead to fewer fatalities from opiate

Medical cannabis industry sees room to grow

BY MONICA STABILE

Employment in Illinois' medical marijuana industry has more than doubled in one year, resulting in millions of dollars in annual economic output for the state.

One industry group says the program is capable of even more.

The Illinois medical cannabis pilot program has generated \$147.8 million in annual economic activity, in addition to creating more than 2,700 direct and indirect jobs so far in 2017, according to the Medical Cannabis Alliance of Illinois. That represents a 50 percent increase from 2016, and MCAI says that as more patients become eligible for treatment under the program, jobs and the economy will grow.

Emeka Jackson-Hicks, mayor of East St. Louis, explained during a legislative panel in Springfield that the medical cannabis cultivation center in East St. Louis created 26 well-paying jobs and has changed their economic landscape for the better.

"The medical cannabis industry has not only brought much-needed jobs and job training to East St. Louis, but the players are active civic partners," Jackson-Hicks said. "East St. Louis has embraced progressive treatment solutions, and they are becoming the lifeline for our community."

Bret Bender, general manager of Maribis Springfield, a medical cannabis dispensary which opened earlier this year, said the medical cannabis industry encounters many obstacles because the federal government hasn't legalized cannabis.

The industry experiences economic losses when filing their taxes because marijuana is considered a Schedule 1 substance by the U.S.

Drug Enforcement Agency, meaning there's no medicinal use and it's highly addictive. It falls under a tax code that forbids cannabis companies from deducting expenses from their income, except the cost of goods sold. This causes cannabis companies to be taxed at a higher rate than other businesses, he said.

"We as cannabis companies currently cannot write off a single expense as a business expense," Bender said. "We are not paying taxes on our profits; we are paying taxes on our revenues, which leads to more expensive products for patients."

A lack of financial institutions that can do business with the marijuana industry presents another issue because banks are heavily audited by the federal government, advocates say.

If marijuana was moved from a Schedule 1 drug to Schedule 2, which categorizes drugs with a potential for abuse but with accepted medical use, banking opportunities would open for the cannabis industry.

"That bank can basically charge whatever fees it wants to because it knows that cannabis companies have nowhere else to turn to in Illinois," Bender said.

Bank of Springfield is the only bank in Illinois that does business with the medical cannabis industry, he added.

When the *Springfield Business Journal* reached out to Bank of Springfield for comment, Peter Graham, the vice president of business development, said the financial institution is legally bound by federal privacy laws and regulations and cannot release customer information.

The Medical Cannabis Pilot Program became effective in 2014 under Gov. Pat Quinn, a Democrat, and was later extended to 2020 by Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner.



Marijuana plants growing at a cultivation center near Peoria

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

Currently there are 19 active cultivation centers that grow and distribute its products to 53 medical cannabis dispensaries in Illinois. In April 2017, the state issued two permits to open cultivation centers. Under Illinois law, there can be up to 22 cultivation centers and 60 medical cannabis dispensaries.

The Rauner administration did not respond to multiple interview requests from the *Springfield Business Journal* seeking comment on whether the governor supported expanding the number

of medical conditions to be treated with medical cannabis.

Medical cannabis advocates say the best route to ensure that the marijuana industry becomes an economic engine in Illinois is to increase the number of eligible patients that can purchase medical cannabis.

"Our ability to create jobs and provide an even greater economic impact to all the communities in which we operate is far from its maximum potential," said Ross Morreale, chairman of MCAI. ♦

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Anheuser-Busch sues Chick Fritz in distribution dispute

BY MONICA STABILE

Springfield business Robert 'Chick' Fritz Inc. is being sued by Anheuser-Busch for refusing to give up the right to distribute several European brands of beer.

The federal lawsuit and a counterclaim by Chick Fritz question the application of a state law regulating beer distribution.

Anheuser-Busch filed its complaint at the end of January in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois, claiming Chick Fritz refused to give up rights to distribute Stella Artois, Bass, Beck's, Spaten, Franziskaner, and St. Pauli Girl beer in return for appropriate compensation under Illinois law.

The Illinois Beer Industry Fair Dealing Act regulates business deals between brewers and beer distributors. Anheuser-Busch says in court documents that if a brewer decides to end distribution rights with a wholesaler, BIFDA would determine the compensation amount and whether a brewer's product is 10 percent or less of the total number of all beer supplies sold from the wholesaler's business.

Chick Fritz is the largest beer distributor in central and southern Illinois and is the only business in the state which has refused to give up selling Anheuser-Busch brands. Chick Fritz says in court documents that there is no good reason for Anheuser-Busch to terminate its distribution rights.

Anheuser-Busch imports many international brands of beer into the United

States, but due to past legacy agreements with former suppliers of those European brands, Chick Fritz is able to sell those products.

The lawsuit claims a previous contract between Chick Fritz and InBev USA, the former supplier, says that their agreement would end if InBev USA ceases to be the importer, in addition to prohibiting Chick Fritz from suing the importer for any damages that the contract termination might cause. Anheuser-Busch is owed by InBev Worldwide Inc.

Anheuser-Busch distributes its main beer brands through Anheuser-Busch Wholesalers, an independent network of wholesalers in Illinois which each have a designated district in which they sell Anheuser-Busch products to area retailers. Anheuser-Busch aims to streamline all of its brands to be sold by AB Wholesalers, including European brands.

The only Anheuser-Busch brands that Chick Fritz sells are European beers. Earlier in January, Anheuser-Busch offered to pay Chick Fritz a multiple of gross profit, between five to six-and-a-half times for each of the beverages.

Chick Fritz admitted in court documents that the European products supplied by AB Wholesalers comprise 10 percent or less of the total number of beers the company sold annually. However, Chick Fritz claims the state law requires good cause to terminate distribution rights.

"Although the European beers constitute less than 10 percent of Chick Fritz's



The Chick Fritz distribution warehouse on Hazel Dell Road

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

annual sales volume, their value to Chick Fritz's overall portfolio is immeasurable," the company wrote in court documents. "The European beers are premium brands which add prestige to Chick Fritz's overall portfolio of beers and enhance the goodwill associated with Chick Fritz's business."

Chick Fritz claims the European beers are among its most profitable, and demand for those beers increases demand for its

other products. The company also claims Anheuser-Busch "discriminates" against it by not allowing Chick Fritz to purchase promotional materials like branded signage and glassware.

Anheuser-Busch has filed for an extension of time to answer Chick Fritz's counterclaim.

At time of publication, attorneys for both parties had not responded to a request for comment. ♦



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Front (L-R): Michelle Ownbey, Pamela Frazier, Jessica Hand - Back (L-R): Matthew Case, Patrick Yeagle, John Howerter

PHOTO / LEE MILNER

Corporate Review: Finding the right workers means being the right company

Twice a year since 2012, the Sangamon County Economic Outlook Survey has offered policy makers and the public a snapshot of attitudes and perceptions in the business community. Undertaken by the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce with help from the Survey Research Office at the University of Illinois Springfield, the Spring 2017 Economic Outlook Survey focuses on job skills – what employers want in workers and whether those traits are readily available.

Matthew Case, interim director of the Survey Research Office, says the results of the survey show employers highly value soft skills – traits like leadership, teamwork and communication. On May 18, *Springfield Business Journal* sat down for lunch with Case and a handful of local business leaders who shared their experiences with hiring and their insights into building a strong team. Additionally, two other business leaders who couldn't attend the lunch discussion weighed in afterward. The insights these leaders shared are reproduced below as a lightly

edited transcript.

Before the discussion even formally began, talk turned to perceptions of Springfield among employees and why it matters for employers.

Patrick Yeagle, *Springfield Business Journal* associate editor: I've actually never thought about the perception of Springfield from the perspective of employers. I always think of it as the Chamber wants to bring businesses here, or the mayor wants to bring businesses here, but I never thought about it from the perspective of businesses which are already here – how they benefit from kind of selling Springfield.

Jessica Hand, systems director for recruitment and HR operations at Memorial Health System: Absolutely, because you're selling the job, but you're also selling the community. They're not working 24-7.

Yeagle: They have to want to be here.

Hand: They have to want to be here, and they have to feel like they fit – not just in the organization, but in the community. The last thing you want to do is

mislead somebody who has a certain expectation and uproots their life to come here. That's costly for the employee and the employer.

Pamela Frazier, president and CEO of All In One On-site Wash & Detail: Then you have an unhappy employee who's not going to stick around, and you're going to have to replace them.

Yeagle: That probably costs time and energy.

John Howerter, senior vice president of EOM for LRS Output Management: It costs a lot – not only moving them but training them, getting them acclimated with the people they work with. It's very disruptive to bring somebody in for just a short time.

The importance of soft skills

Howerter: We're always looking at experience; what have you done? Have you done something that fits? We actually invested in a program a number of years ago called Power Hiring, and we trained our managers to be better interviewers. Good sales people are easy to interview;



John Howerter

PHOTO / LEE MILNER

they're very likeable, but let's look at what they did. It's amazing how many people embellish things on their resume. You can't base your biggest claim on something you didn't really do.

Hand: We've preached behavioral-based interviewing for decades, right?



Patrick Yeagle

PHOTO / LEE MILNER

Well, here's the difference. One of them is that candidate faking. You can Google behavioral-based interviewing and have read all the questions and the best way to answer them. But in this method, you're really putting them on the spot and really drilling down to get to that achievement orientation.

Kayla Edwards, director of client services at Express Employment Professionals (via email): My first answer would be to call Express, as we do the work to try and screen for these skills both during our in person interviews with all of our associates as well as validating through third party references. What has been

found, though, is that more and more business leaders back the idea of investing in young children's development as a down-payment toward shaping a stronger workforce. Proactively getting involved as a company with local youth organizations can pay great dividends in the future.

Howterter: You know, if you can't take feedback, and you can't communicate, and you can't work in a group and hear other people's perspectives, you're going to work yourself into a corner. Sometimes that becomes more of a manager's role, to help people understand the way they are, because maybe they don't realize it. Soft skills are very important, though they're probably less important in the people you never let out into public.

Yeagle: But things like analytical thinking or teamwork probably still matter for the behind-the-scenes folks.

Howterter: It does. We've had amazing fights internally about who owns what parking place, and the parking places aren't owned by anybody. We have a set of company values that have evolved. We expect that you have the technical skills to do the job, but that's not one of our company values. One of our values is you're going to work hard, and you're going to be honest. The second is you're willing to communicate openly. And the last is use technology as an aid. ... It's not always about hiring the super stars. It's about hiring the people who want to work hard and want to be on the team.

Yeagle: Would you prefer to have someone who is weak on hard skills but

strong on soft skills, or vice-versa?

Nicholas Strause, general manager at White Oaks Mall (via email): In today's workforce environment, especially in the retail industry, soft skills are critical attributes that companies and hiring managers look for in candidates. Retailers consistently look for personal attributes in candidates that will mesh well with the many facets of retail; customer service, managing sales associates, obtaining monthly store goals and communication.

Frazier: For All In One, we've been blessed, and we love what we do, but it's physical. If you don't get along with others, it makes for a long day. If we're not pulling together, it's like climbing uphill, and you feel it. No matter what age group, when you give them an opportunity, it's, "Wow, I didn't realize you did this." It's demanding, and it takes time; it's not a sprint. You have to have a willing heart and be trainable and want to know. We're out in the elements. It's hot. There's dust. There's wind. It takes a person making that commitment.

Yeagle: I hadn't thought about malleability as a skill - the ability to be trained.

Michelle Ownbey, Springfield Business Journal associate publisher: But you really can't teach a good attitude.

Frazier: It's ongoing, because those trying times are going to come. Heat, fatigue - it's coming. That's when you have to press through it the most. And I don't ask them to do anything I don't do myself. It's not even about having previous experience for us. Sometimes it's about

deprogramming from your previous brand and values of how you do things.

Howterter: It's a great question, because you can't teach it. You can teach the technical stuff. Any time you're making a comparison of potential employees,



Michelle Ownbey

PHOTO / LEE MILNER

you're making your best guess with the limited amount of data you can gather. If you have two people, and one's got a good attitude but isn't as successful on paper, you might go that way. It really depends.

JeH: When we're looking at candidates, we have to prioritize what our requirements are, because everything can't

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Jessica Hand PHOTO / LEE MILNER

be number one. That's a tough balance. And we're really more in the proactive recruitment phase. Yes, we still have applicants coming in, but it's more going out to the environment, trying to find leads and getting them engaged in our process. Really, the most effective way to do that is based off of those hard skills. And our assessment has a section on hard skills and competency, but also around soft skills - what we deem important as our culture.

Developing soft skills within organizations

Hand: At Memorial, we have a Leadership Development Institute. It's based on 18 competencies, and each year, the leadership decides what we're going to focus on. We also have the Employee Development Institute. Those opportunities

do exist.
Yeagle: Why has that been a priority for you?
Hand: We're very committed to learning and growth. Opportunities to engage, to have a voice and feel heard - that all plays into it.
Frazier: For us, a lot of team building doesn't take place on the job site, because that's not where you get it. The bigger picture is after-hours, making the time for continuing training - not when I'm at the job, because then it's too late. It's about constantly getting together and brainstorming.
Howter: I think about the people who mentor the younger people. It's the managers, the leaders.
Yeagle: You're kind of all touching on what seems like corporate culture. How are those values communicated to new people?

Howter: We only start employees on a Monday, and we do that because in North America, we bring everyone in from everywhere. We've got offices in Atlanta and Connecticut and California, and they come to Springfield when they start. And we have a lunch with a couple of senior managers. The idea is, you've been drinking from the fire hose the past couple of days, so ask us anything you want. Everybody on that first day gets our core philosophies.

... I came to LRS in 1992, and before that, I was at IBM. I managed a group of 250 people; half of them were in Europe and half of them were in Asia, and you visit them and have dinner with them and meet their families. I think that is a big factor. It comes down to a consistent face and not a revolving door in the senior management. And really, that all kind of

comes from (LRS co-founder) Dick Levi. If you've ever met Dick, he's as honest and straightforward and humble a guy as you'll ever meet in your life. That's our culture.

Frazier: We offer service, and we have to deliver. The employees are part of the face (of the company). They're performing the work, and there are standards we expect, or I won't leave the jobsite, and the customer won't be satisfied. You may not be here tomorrow, but the customer is going to be satisfied. That's the reputation you build. The employees know that; they recognize that. You always keep those standards, and they buy in. (To JH) And I have to say, at your facility (Memorial Medical Center), it's from top to bottom. Everyone buys into it. ...

Hand: And that's intentional. We did a huge organizational undertaking to reset those expectations. Day one, they hear from our CEO, Ed Curtis, as well as other leaders on various topics. ... And twice a year, we have connect sessions where Ed Curtis and our COO, Chuck Callahan, get up in front of 24 different sessions over the course of two weeks and report to all employees, "Here's what's going on. Here's what's important to us."

Yeagle: It seems like when we talk about soft skills, we're dancing around the idea of character. What are the hardest traits to find that you really wish you could find more of?

Frazier: It comes down to just wanting to work. Young and old, they want to dictate the times, the availability.

Hand: I concur with that wholeheartedly. There's talk of work-life balance and work-life integration, and everyone has a different idea of what work is. As a leader, you have to really balance that and tender



Pamela Frazier PHOTO / LEE MILNER

the expectations around what that looks like.

Howter: This is reality.
Edwards (via email): Being on time and arriving on the job mentally prepared for work are fundamental issues. These and related social-emotional qualities are every bit as significant to workforce performance as the technical skills required for individual positions. One of the hottest topics with every business I serve involves the most basic of workplace considerations: job attendance - going to work, every day, five days a week.

Technology and communication

Stause (via email): There are many distractions in today's world due to the advancements of technology. Many of

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Matthew Case PHOTO / LEE MILNER

these distractions take away focus and concentration in the workplace and at home. Finding the time to turn off the cell phone, log out of social media and continue to grow and expand one's personal soft skills is critical to consistently self improve.

Edwards (via email): I believe technology has changed things, and not always for the better, especially when it comes

to professional communication. While getting in contact is more instant, the use of emoticons, abbreviations and text slang or lingo has taken the place of traditional professional communication ability. When the emerging workforce has spent the majority of their time communicating in this fashion, the moment they have to have a "real" face-to-face professional conversation or interaction, they are mostly unprepared. Encouraging the young person to practice, in-person, with someone prior to going on an interview is very beneficial, and that is also why we put so much emphasis on our in-person screening processes at Express before our clients and associates are introduced. ... Let's not forget social media, however. Your online profile is used more and more by companies to determine more about personality and character, so it's very important to keep that in mind when interviewing.

Howter: I think (technology) has made it worse. I worked at IBM during the whole '80s, and 1981 was when IBM announced their first personal computer. They thought they'd sell 300,000 personal computers the first year. ... They sold like four million. At that time, I had a customer who was a vice president of IT at Archer Daniels Midland. He made the bold

statement, "I believe that the personal computer is the single biggest detriment to personal productivity that I've seen in my career." My boss at the time just about fell out of her chair, and she asked, "How can that be?" He said, "Because people are trying to make this word processor work like a typewriter, and when they can't figure it out, they ask this person and this person." It was really a training issue, but soft skills can't be learned when you're texting. It's communication."

Hand: After you've sent three emails back and forth, pick up the phone.

Howter: Imagine that with people for whom English isn't their first language. There can be days worth of email exchanges, and someone will come to me and say, "I don't know what this guy means." I go to their desk and dial the speaker phone, and I walk away. Technology is great for sharing information across time zones, because when we're in bed, the guys in Australia are working, so we're circling the globe. But technology has inhibited people's ability to communicate. ♦

Read about the Sangamon County Economic Outlook Survey online at uis.edu/surveyresearchoffice/projects/#sceos.



Nicholas Stause PHOTO / COURTESY OF WHITE OAKS MALL

2017 CORPORATE REVIEW PANELISTS



Matthew Case

Interim director of Survey Research Office at University of Illinois Springfield.



Kayla Edwards

Director of client services at Express Employment Professionals.



Pamela Frazier

President and CEO of ALL in ONE On-site Wash & Detail.



Jessica Hand

Systems director for recruitment and HR operations at Memorial Health System.



John Howter

Senior vice president of EOM for LRS Output Management.



Nicholas Stause

General Manager at White Oaks Mall.

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MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Sources: The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. * - State of Illinois number includes all state government agencies, including education institutions within Sangamon County.
Ranked by number of employees.

	EMPLOYER NAME	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	PRINCIPAL	PRODUCT/SERVICE	YEAR EST'D	WEBSITE
1	State of Illinois	17,800	Bruce Rauner, Governor	Government	1818	illinois.gov
2	Memorial Health System	5,791	Edgar J. Curtis, President and CEO	Healthcare	1897	memorialmedical.com
3	Hospital Sisters Health System	4,247	Mary Starmann-Harrison (HSHS) Charles Lucore, President and CEO (St. John's)	Healthcare	1875	st-johns.org
4	Springfield Public Schools #186	2,673	Jennifer Gill, Superintendent	Education	1854	sps186.org
5	Springfield Clinic	2,300	Ray Williams, CEO	Healthcare	1939	springfieldclinic.com
6	SIU School of Medicine	1,539	Jerry Kruse M.D., MSPH Dean/Provost	Higher Education / Healthcare	1970	siumed.edu
7	University of Illinois-Springfield	1,524	Susan J. Koch, Ed.D., Vice President and Chancellor	Higher Education	1969	uis.edu
8	City of Springfield	1,402	James O. Langfelder, Mayor	Government	1832	springfield.il.us
9	Blue Cross/Blue Shield	1,310	Jim McLean, Vice President of Operations	Insurance	1969	bcbstil.com
10	Horace Mann	1,100	Marita Zuraitis, President & CEO	Insurance	1945	horacemann.com

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Can booming global medical tourism promise growth for Springfield?

BY EMILY JANKAUSKI

The capital city often associates summer with tourism. As that season approaches, the Mid-Illinois Medical District in Springfield invites individuals – both nationally and globally– to learn about Springfield’s other booming form of tourism: medical tourism.

Medical tourism allows people who require surgery or other medical proce-

dures to travel for the best physicians and medical offerings available. According to Leslie Jebson, assistant to the chair of surgery at SIU School of Medicine, it’s a \$20-billion-dollar industry.

Domestic medical tourism allows residents to travel to another city within the same country to have a highly skilled physician perform a medical procedure. Additionally, international medical tourism involves individuals traveling to other

countries in an effort to locate the best doctors for specific surgeries or medical offerings.

Inbound medical tourists are those individuals traveling to the U.S. for medical procedures, while outbound medical tourists from the U.S. travel internationally for medical operations. Jebson says the industry is growing, and consumers often research doctors and facilities to find the best option.

“People are more attuned to who the best doctors are,” he said.

In fact, websites like Healthcare Bluebook allow individuals to search the approximate cost of a medical procedure by zip code.

As for Springfield, Jebson indicates there is room for growth.

“It’s a passive movement, but it’s gaining ground,” he said. “It’s one thing we want to put on our citizens’ radar.”

Springfield’s medical tourism offerings include reconstructive plastic surgeries, heart and lung care, thoracic oncology procedures, hand and extremity transplants, and total joint replacement, such as hip and knee. According to Jebson, Springfield doctors also perform more routine services for medical tourists.

SIU reaches out to people interested in medical tourism through the internet. Recently, the school launched a new website devoted to medical tourism, but the organization also utilizes social media to promote its services. Last week, a piece on breast reconstruction shared by SIU provided 12,000 hits.

The capital city, while in its infancy for medical tourism, has much to offer both domestic and international medical tourists. Jebson notes Springfield has more than 1,000 physicians and a plethora of medical services. He says that local tourism, combined with low travel costs and inexpensive hotel rates, makes Springfield a prime location for medical tourism.

For Jebson, Springfield’s local tourism and medical tourism have the ability to “cross-pollinate” multiple sectors. Local accommodations have the potential to attract more visitors, especially domestic patients who are searching for high-end services.

“Someone can stay for a few days downtown and recuperate in the hotel or in the hospital,” he said.

Jebson notes the capital city’s ability to grow medical tourism is simply a matter of capitalizing on the available infrastructure.

“We’re not looking at building a new facility,” he said. “We’re letting people know that we have it here. We should continue to leverage it.”

Springfield’s potential for medical tourism could also provide a surge in local tourism, he says, with increased revenue for local businesses and hotels. Jebson says capacity is certainly not an issue for Springfield.

“You look around and it’s all right here,” he said. “Between all of our associations, we have some world-class health care.” ♦



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MANUFACTURERS – MORGAN COUNTY

Sources: “Manufacts” produced by the Quantum Growth Initiative; Jacksonville Regional Economic Development Corporation; the manufacturers Ranked by number of full-time employees.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE / FAX (=)	WEBSITE	FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	FACILITY SIZE (SQ. FT.)	PRINCIPAL(S)	PRODUCT/SERVICE	YEAR EST'D
1	Reynolds Consumer Products 500 E. Superior Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-243-3311 217-479=1222	reynoldsconsumerproducts.com	800	360,000 (west plant), 508,000 (east plant)	Jeff Phillips, plant manager	Polyethylene bags and films	1962
2	Perma-Bound Hertzberg New Method Inc. 617 E. Vandalia Rd. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-243-5451 217-243=7505	perma-bound.com	300	320,000	James Orr, CEO; Bill Hull, plant manager	Prebound books for schools and libraries	1953
3	Nestlé USA 1111 Carnation Drive Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-9511 217-479=2280	nestleusa.com	181	30 acres	Brent Keener, general manager / plant manager	Non-dairy creamer	1970
4	Bound to Stay Bound Books 1880 W. Morton Ave. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-5191 217-245=0424	btsb.com	147	110,000	Bob Sibert, president; Rob Crain, plant manager	Prebound children's library books	1920
5	ILMO Products Company 7 Eastgate Drive Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-2183 217-243=7634	ilmoproducts.com	100	40,000 (8 acres)	Linda Standley, CEO; Brad Floreth, president	Wholesale/retail distributor of industrial, medical, laboratory EPA protocol & specialty gases and welding equipment sales & service	1913
6	Brahler's Truckers Supply 21 Harold Cox Drive Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-243-6471 217-245=0565	brahlers.com	92	80,000 (4 buildings)	Richard Brahler, CEO; Terry Ranson, plant manager	Retread truck tires and sales, truck and industrial tire sales and service, farm tires	1972
7	CCK Automations, Inc. 500 Capitol Way Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-243-6040 217-245=4105	cckautomations.com	72	100,000	JJ Richardson, CEO	Printed circuit board assemblies, industrial control panels, injection molded parts, engineering services	1999
8	Illinois Road Contractors P.O. Box 1060 Jacksonville, IL 62651	217-245-6181 217-243=0604	ircgrp.com	65	44,000	P. Devon Davidsmeyer, CEO	Liquid asphalt and aggregate application	1925
9	Jacksonville Machine Inc. 2265 West Morton Ave. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-243-1119 217-243=3631	jmimachine.com	55	40,000	Jeff Rodems, president	CNC job shop	1919
10	Rutland 7 Crabtree Road Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-7810	rutland.com	30	60,000	Faith Nergenah	Manufacturer of stove and fireplace repair products	1961
10	UGL 550 Capitol Way Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-243-7878	ugl.com	30	43,000	George Crollly	Home maintenance and repair items	1985
11	Eli Bridge Company 800 Case Ave. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-245-7145	elibridge.com	23	66,000	Patty Sullivan	Amusement ride manufacturing and metal fabrication	1919
12	Pallet Repair Systems (PRS) 2 Eastgate Drive Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-291-0009	prsgroupinc.com	20	50,000	Jeff Williams	OEM Machinery and job shop services, machining/fabrication	1989
13	Helena Chemical 1995 Old Grace Road Meredosia, IL 62665	217-584-1133	helenachemical.com	16	4 buildings including a 12,000 square ft. liquid fertilizer and chemical building	Jason Smith	crop protection products, fertilizer and fertilizer application services, specialized nutrients, seed and seed treatments, financial services and precision agricultural services and software	1980
14	Tarps Manufacturing 1000 State Highway 104 Meredosia, IL 62665	217-584-1900	tarpsmfg.com	15	28,000	Rich Ott	Custom Tarps	2003

‘Bloom where you grow’

How Jacksonville is nurturing its manufacturing sector



CCK Automations makes printed circuit boards for electronics.
PHOTO / COURTESY OF CCK AUTOMATIONS

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

Paul Ellis jokes that he doesn't do anything without a plan. Ellis is president of the Jacksonville Regional Economic Development Corporation, which exists to attract and grow businesses in Morgan and Scott counties. Under Ellis' guidance, JREDC is undertaking a highly targeted effort to nurture manufacturing in Jacksonville, and they're leaving nothing to chance.

Jacksonville is home to at least six manufacturing companies making a wide variety of products – everything from coffee creamer to Ferris wheels – and there are several more manufacturers in the surrounding area. Ellis notes that two manufacturers in the area – circuit board maker CCK Automations and Westermeyer Industries, which makes refrigeration components – got their starts as small garage-based operations and have grown to occupy large facilities.

"We're always using a planting metaphor: bloom where you grow," Ellis said. "Both companies are folks that have a lot of history in the community. Fortunately, the community has stepped up to keep that field watered."

Ellis, a certified planner and certified economic developer, says most of the existing companies started in and around Jacksonville, rather than moving there. Nestle and Reynolds Consumer Products are two well-known global companies which have set up shop in Jacksonville, but they are the exception, not the rule.

"Most people think of us as chasing smoke stacks," Ellis said, "but 80 percent of growth in jobs and investment comes from retention and expansion of whoever's here."

To help those companies grow, JREDC has helped arrange public and private financing, offered guidance on technical problems and regulatory compliance, facilitated employee training programs and more. The group also uses a software program to produce reports of investment and development, which helps attract further investment.

"You can't automate it fully, but we've done so as much as we can," Ellis said. "We're actually coming in and adding value for manufacturers, which are a very important

base in Jacksonville."

While JREDC isn't solely focused on manufacturing, its efforts to grow that sector so far have been fruitful, and a relatively new program has the potential to further accelerate growth. JREDC has partnered with the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center to evaluate ways Jacksonville-area companies can become more efficient and effective.

Based in Peoria, IMEC is a nonprofit team of more than 50 manufacturing experts. Rob Newbold, regional manager at IMEC, says the experts visit factories to compare them against the best practices of similar companies.

"It helps companies ask 'How are people just like me doing things differently,'" Newbold said. "How can I move up the best-practices ladder?"

Newbold calls it a "diagnosis," which covers not just the actual production process but also financial health, customer interaction, staffing and long term strategy.

"We're helping them see where they can make adjustments and improvements in their own business," he said.

Tyler Aring, assistant operations manager at CCK Automations, says IMEC's process helped the company develop its strategic plan, among other things.

"One of the things they helped us do was bring all the levels of our organization together, as far as assessment of what our true needs are – from the hourly worker to the CEO," Aring said.

As more companies in a given area complete the process, the results are rolled into a summary report that helps the local economic development group determine what larger problems may exist, such as transportation bottlenecks.

"It gives them a better sense of who their manufacturers are and how they can help them," Newbold said.

Ellis says the key to the success of Jacksonville's manufacturing sector, like any other, is constant self-evaluation.

"There's lots of competition out there, and it gets more competitive every day," Ellis said. "You're either growing and improving, or you're dying." ♦



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MANUFACTURERS – SANGAMON COUNTY

Sources: "Large Employers and Manufacturers" produced by the Quantum Growth Partnership; the manufacturers DND - Did Not Disclose. Ranked by number of full-time employees.

	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE / FAX (=)	WEBSITE	FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES	FACILITY SIZE (SQ. FT.)	PRINCIPAL(S)	PRODUCT/SERVICE	YEAR EST'D
1	Bunn-O-Matic Corporation 1400 Stevenson Dr. Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-6601 217-542=2827	bunn.com	500	DND	Arthur Bunn, president & CEO	Manufacturer of a complete line of commercial dispensed beverage equipment, paper filters and home coffee brewers	1957
2	Standard Aero 1200 N. Airport Dr. Springfield, IL 62707	800-731-7371 217-541=3365	standardaero.com	250	250,000+	James Campbell, general manager	Aircraft service, modification	1911
3	Brandt Consolidated, Inc. 2935 S. Koke Mill Road Springfield, IL 62711	217-547-5800 217-547=5801	brandt.co	200	25,000	Rick Brandt, CEO	Fertilizers, crop protection, micronutrients, spray adjuvants, seed	1953
4	Nudo Products, Inc. 1500 Taylor Ave. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-5636 217-528=8722	nudo.com	198	400,000	Darryl Rosser, president	Manufacturer of wall and ceiling panels with a variety of substrates	1954
5	Simplex, Inc. PO Box 7388, Springfield, IL 62791	217-483-1600 217-483=1616	simplexdirect.com	172	125,000	Thomas Debrey, president	Load banks, day tanks, fuel supply systems	1952
6	DICKEY-john Corporation 5200 Dickey john Road Auburn, IL 62615	217-438-3371 217-438=6012	dickey-john.com	145	225,000	Jeff Schertz, vice pres. of operations	Electronic design and manufacture of systems controls for agriculture and public works	1966
7	Mel-O-Cream Donuts Intl. 5456 International Parkway Springfield, IL 62711	217-483-7272 217-483=7744	mel-o-cream.com	115	70,000	David Waltrip, president; Dan Alewelt, director of operations	Frozen dough products and frozen pre-fried donuts	1932
8	Solomon Colors, Inc. 4050 Color Plant Road Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-3112 217-522=3145	solomoncolors.com	94	250,000	Richard Solomon, pres./CEO; Charles Kreutzer, vice pres./CFO	Manufacturing of iron oxide pigments, color for concrete, mortar and concrete products	1927
9	Henry Technologies 701 S. Main St. Chatham, IL 62629	217-483-2406 217-483=2462	henrytech.com	90	DND	Sandy MacDonald, general manager / plant manager	Components for HVAC / Industrial & Commercial Refrigeration	1914
10	Springfield Plastics, Inc. 7300 W. State Route 104 Auburn, Illinois 62615	217-438-6167 217-438=6949	spipe.com	70	40,000	Steve Baker, president	Manufactured plastic drainage pipe	1978

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Stay cool

Refrigeration manufacturer Henry Technologies looks to the future



A worker prepares valves at Henry Technologies, Inc. in Chatham PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

It's easy to miss the single-story white building in Chatham which Henry Technologies, Inc. calls home. Sitting on a quiet section of South Main Street on the city's outskirts, the corrugated metal building covering more than 100,000 square feet contains about 90 workers making refrigeration components on a variety of machines.

Henry Technologies isn't a household name because the company doesn't sell its products to consumers. Instead, the control valves, pressure vessels and other refrigeration components built in Chatham can be found in industrial and commercial applications like grocery store freezers.

Despite its relative obscurity, however, Henry Technologies has a global reach, with offices in the U.S., Scotland, Australia, Canada, Singapore and China. The 103-year-old company is the second-largest private employer in Chatham and supplies parts to everyone from Disney to the U.S. military. The facility in Chatham has operated for 40 years, and now it's adapting to stay competitive for the future.

Guy Henry founded Henry Valve Company in Chicago in 1914. The company originally made gas lanterns and gauges for Model T Ford automobiles. Over the ensuing decades, Henry Valve Company became Henry Technologies, Inc., acquired other companies and established its Chatham facility in 1974.

Andrew Williams, finance director at Henry Technologies, started with the company in 2014. Williams says he was looking for a challenge after working for a different local manufacturer. He says Sandy MacDonald, senior vice president of operations, hired him to help transform Henry Technologies "from a very blue-collar manufacturing company to a more modernized, state-of-the-art facility."

The company is trying to become more involved in the community, Williams says, joking that most people have never heard of Henry Technologies.

"If I say we're across from the baseball field, they say, 'Oh, I know where that is because I park in that parking lot,'" he said.

Like many companies, Henry Technologies faces the economic challenges that arise from a globalized economy. Some of the company's competitors are based in places like China, where significantly lower labor costs mean less expensive products. Williams says the company is waiting to see whether President Donald Trump attempts to impose a tariff on Chinese goods, which could help level the playing field for U.S.-based manufacturers but would also raise prices for goods Americans are used to buying inexpensively.

At the same time, Williams says Henry Technologies' own facility in China, which came with

the acquisition of an Australian company, would be affected by the same tariffs. Williams notes that it's often not cost-effective to ship products like Henry's large pressure tanks overseas, meaning U.S.-based manufacturers retain an advantage when selling those products domestically.

As he shows visitors around the building, Williams introduces each employee by name. He says one of the traits that drew him to Henry Technologies was MacDonald's core value of treating others with dignity and respect. Williams waves to an employee making repairs on a large machine before stopping at a work station where another employee is making pressure tanks by pressing end caps on a metal cylinder.

The work station represents an experiment in efficiency, as the employee completes several stages of the process himself instead of doing one repetitive task all day. It's a reversal of the now-common assembly line practice that made Ford Motor Company an innovator in the early 1900s. For the workers at Henry Technologies, building most of the tank before sending it to another station may prove more efficient, and it may help prevent injuries associated with repetitive tasks.

Some of Henry Technologies' adaptations have nothing to do with the product itself. Williams says the company is focused on promoting internally to retain skilled workers and increase job satisfaction. That means workers have opportunities for advancement and additional training in areas like welding. Employees at the Chatham facility come from several of the surrounding communities, but it can be difficult to find reliable workers who are interested in manufacturing work.

"Springfield is a white-collar town," Williams said. "There's not a lot of blue-collar work, so as you get employees, you want to care for them. You want to make sure they have a nice environment. You want to make sure they have quality benefits. You want to pay them well because you value them. If you lose them, it's difficult to replace them."

The company also upgraded its facility in 2015 with help from the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, renovating part of the building to create a welcoming break room.

As automation becomes feasible for an ever-increasing number of tasks, Henry Technologies is trying to balance that promise of efficiency with its commitment to the community. The company is planning to buy a powerful cutting laser this year, and Williams says that actually required hiring an engineer — formerly an intern at the company — to operate and maintain it.

"There are young folks in the community who want to stay in the community," he said, "but they get an engineering degree and ask, 'Where do I go?' We want them here." ♦



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Spine Center
Spring Creek Water Treatment
Springfield Clinic First 900
Springfield Clinic Main Campus
Springfield Clinic Carpenter
Springfield Housing Authority
St. Anthony's Hospital
St. John's Hospital
St. John's Hospital - Lincolnshire
St. John's Hospital - Panther Creek
St. John's Lutheran Church
St. Joseph's Home
St. Mary's Hospital
Staybridge Inn & Suites
Target
Taylorville Fire Department
Taylorville Memorial Hospital
Taylorville Municipal Building
Union Station
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1	5Flavors Catering 3086 Normandy Rd. Springfield, IL 62703	217-787-4654 5Flavors.com Info@5Flavors.com	Chip Kennedy, Josh Lindvall, Josh Sonneborn	30-2,000	\$25-\$100	Playful spins on old classics to cutting edge contemporary cuisine and custom menus created just for you.	Intimate gatherings to fund-raising galas and everything in between including weddings and corporate events	2009
2	Arena Food Service, Inc. 3101 Greenhead Drive, Suite B Springfield, IL 62711	217-698-2944 arenafoodservice.com info@arenafoodservice.com	Shaun Moore and Sherri Madonia	25-5,000	varies	Fully customized event services featuring modern renditions with a strong culinary foundation.	Galas, fundraisers, corporate and private events, weddings, class reunions	1985
3	Conn's Catering 835 S. 2nd Street Springfield, IL 62704	217-523-4466 connscatering.net info@connshospitalitygroup.com	Karen and Court Conn	25-5,000	varies	Full variety of catering options available, including hand-carved meat stations, plated or buffet meals, breakfast bars, and more.	All types	1947
4	Cured Catering 2005 Barberry Dr. Springfield, IL 62704	217-494-2425 www.curedcaters.com curedcaters@gmail.com	Brian Reilly	25-1,000	varies	Full scale catering with an eye towards presentation. Gourmet Hors D'oeuvres, soups, salads, entrees.	Specializing in weddings and custom events.	
5	Field of Sweets PO Box 361 Rochester, IL 62563	217-441-4639 fieldofsweets.com orders@fieldofsweets.com	Eleana & Ross Fielding	25-250	\$8-\$35	Petit fours, cakes, cheesecake, cookies and brownies.	Food truck events, weddings,festivals, holiday events, and other events.	2014
6	Hamilton's Catering 101 Main Street Franklin, IL 62638	217-675-2720 hamiltonscatering.com info@hamiltonscatering.com	George Hamilton	50-5,000	\$8 and up	Prime rib, pork loin with bourbon/peach glaze, parmesan crusted chicken, fried chicken	Weddings, holiday parties, business parties, family events, etc.	1913
7	Just the Basics Catering 15 S. Old State Capitol Plaza Springfield, IL 62701	217-899-7239 justthebasicscatering@gmail.com	Connie Regan	20-700	\$10 and up	Modern American, farm to table	All types	2016
8	Nelson's Catering 3005 Great Northern Rd Springfield, IL 62711	787-9443 Nelsonscatering.com Info@nelsonscatering.com	Josh Lindvall, Jeff Lindvall	10-10,000	\$8-\$30	Menus tailored to your event. Upscale appetizers, grilled items & BBQ, seafood & prime rib.	Small board meetings, fundraising, galas, private parties, weddings, large corporate events, bar service.	1995
9	Poe's Catering 295 East Andrew Road Springfield IL 62707	217-487-7601 poescatering.com poecater@msn.com	Lance Poe	20-10,000	\$10 and up	Prime rib, fried chicken, BBQ, family recipes	All	1997
10	POUR Bars 3086 Normandy Rd. Springfield, IL 62703	217-679-2709 www.facebook.com/PourBars info@5flavors.com	Chip Kennedy Josh Lindvall Josh Sonneborn	30-2000	varies	Bar service for your formal wedding, backyard party, or anything in between. Poured wine with your dinner, specialty drinks, and professional bartenders.	All	2013
11	Secret Recipes Catering 3086 Normandy Rd. Springfield, IL 62703	217-585-1100 SecretRecipesCateringCo.com Info@SecretRecipesCatering.com	Chip Kennedy Josh Lindvall, Josh Sonneborn	30-2,000	\$15-\$30	American home style cuisine. Chicken romano and our cheesy potatoes are fan favorites.	All	2003
12	Turasky's Catering 1020 West Jefferson Springfield, IL 62702	217-626-2803 turaskyscatering.com tony.turasky@live.com	Tony Turasky	25 & up	\$8 and up	On-site grilling, stuffed pork chops, roast beef top round with au jus gravy, marinated grilled chicken breasts, pulled pork, Italian beef, ribeyes and ribeye sandwiches	Wedding receptions, golf outings, company picnics, company parties, corporate events, banquets, fundraisers, etc.	1978
13	Twyford BBQ & Catering 2562 Twyford Road Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-370-2274 217-370-6353 twyfordbbq.com randy@twyfordbbq.com	Randy & Marla Twyford	25-500	\$10-\$50	BBQ ribs, brisket, pork, whole hog roasts, pork loin, chicken	Food truck locations, festival vending, drop off, buffets for corporate events and employee appreciation, weddings and other social events.	2008

A sweet deal

Field of Sweets food truck prepares for its first farmers market season

BY ERIC WOODS

Growing up near New York City, Eleana Fielding always had a passion for baking. Now she has turned that passion into a business, opening a food truck that only sells desserts.

Fielding earned her degree in baking and pastry arts from Johnson and Wales University before diving into the industry for the next several years. After working at various hotels and college campuses, Fielding was hired as a pastry chef for Lackmann Culinary Services at Adelphi University, and later transferred to the University of Utah in Salt Lake City where she was a part of the grand opening of a bakery on campus.

Soon enough, she found herself on the move again, when her husband's work brought the family to Illinois three years ago. Fielding found that there were no culinary positions here to which she could transfer, so she made her own. "After six months as a stay-at-home mom, I pondered opening a business at home," she said. "I wanted to do bigger, so it was go big or go home. I love baking cakes and pastries, so I researched buying a food truck."

Last year, Fielding received her food truck license, and she recently obtained her Illinois Cottage Food certificate, which

allows for the sale of homemade food at farmers markets. Now, she is the owner of Fields of Sweets food truck based out of Rochester.

Offering cookies, brownies, cheese-cakes, breakfast pastries and more, Fielding's dessert food truck makes individual sales and caters events. She also takes orders online and can ship food around the country.

Fielding is looking forward to the events coming up this summer, as she has only been in business for a couple months. Community enthusiasm has Fielding excited about the future, as does the thought of expanding.

"I am always surprised at the love people have for the local food trucks," she said. "It's very humbling. There are a lot of choices in Springfield, and they choose to come to me."

While it may take some time, Fielding hopes to eventually move Fields of Sweets out of the food truck and into a brick-and-mortar setting. But for now, she is happy to have reignited the career she loves.

"I want to do as many events as possible so I can share my passion for desserts and baking with the community," she said. ♦



PHOTO / COURTESY OF FIELD OF SWEETS



PHOTO / COURTESY OF FIELD OF SWEETS



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	NAME / ADDRESS	PHONE / FAX (=) / WEBSITE	NUMBER OF ROOMS	NUMBER OF MEETING ROOMS	ROOM RATE SINGLE/DOUBLE	GENERAL MANAGER	AMENITIES
1	Wyndham Springfield City Centre 700 E. Adams St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-789-1530 217-789=0709 www.wyndham.com/hotels/49084	369	20	\$109 - \$209	Emily Mitchell	Locally owned full-service hotel featuring 369 guest rooms, including 36 suites, 50,000 sq. ft of meeting space, complimentary Wi-Fi in guest rooms and meeting space, complimentary shuttle to ariport and train station, award winning Nick & Nino's Penthouse Steakhouse on the 30th floor, The Grille at City Centre, Pinnacle Club Lounge, with a panoramic view of the city, Starbucks, heated indoor swimming pool, fitness center, located across the street from the Prairie Capital Convention Center, within walking distance of Lincoln historical sites, pets welcome.
2	President Abraham Lincoln Springfield - A DoubleTree by Hilton 701 E. Adams St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-544-8800 217-544=9607 dtspringfieldil.com	310	17	\$109 - \$209	Robert Sabin	Featuring 310 overnight guest rooms, 13,000 sq. ft. meeting space; complimentary WiFi access in all guest rooms, complimentary shuttle to Amtrak and Abraham Lincoln Capital airport, connected to Prairie Capital Convention Center, heated indoor swimming pool and 24-hour fitness center.
3	Crowne Plaza Hotel 3000 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-7777 217-529=6666 cpspringfield.com	288	32	\$109 - \$229	Alan Filer	All new rooms and 14 suites (with refrigeerators and free Wi-Fi), 32-versatile meeting rooms, 70,000 sq. ft of flexible renovated meeting space, Long 9 Restaurant, Long 9 Bar & Grill with video gaming, proudly bew Starbucks coffe shop, 14th floor indoor pool, sundeck, and Lifecycle fitness center, 24-Hour business center, complimentary shuttle to Amtrak & airport, 850 complimentary parking spaces, great for outdoor events and motorcoach travel.
4	Holiday Inn Express 3050 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-7771 217-529=1777 hiexpress.com	140	2	\$89 - \$165, (2 suites)	Shane Blanford	New and refreshed rooms in 2016, microwaves and refrigerators in all rooms, daily complimentary hot breakfast, free Wi-Fi and fully equipped business center, on-site fitness center, guest laundry facilities, access to all facilities at the Crowne Plaza-including indoor pool, complimentary shuttle to and from Amtrak & airport, free street -level and bus parking, free local and domestic long distance calls.
5	The Statehouse Inn - An Asend Hotel 101 E. Adams St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-528-5100 217-528=4358 thestatehouseinn.com	125	6	\$89 - \$139	Jake Nees	Complimentary full hot breakfast buffet, business center, fitness center, lounge, complimentary on-site parking, complimentary in-room wi-fi, 3 blocks from Amtrak, 6,500 sq. ft. of meeting space
6	Hampton Inn 3185 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-1100 217-529=1105 hamptoninn.com	124	3	\$99 - \$149	Joseph Smith	Complimentary hot deluxe breakfast, free wireless internet, indoor pool and fitness center, easy interstate access, great location
7	Drury Inn & Suites 3180 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-3900 877-732=0594 druryhotels.com	117	1	\$99 - \$159	Josh Chadbourne	Free hot quickstart breakfast, manager's reception, hot foods, indoor pool/jacuzzi, exercise room, guest laundry room, micro/fridge combos, in-room coffee, wired & wireless internet, busi-ness center, free long distance
7	Hilton Garden Inn Springfield 3100 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-7171 217-529=7172 springfieldil.gardeninn.com	117	7	\$95 - \$199, (13 suites)	Chris Fultz	Indoor pool, whirlpool, exercise room, free wired / wireless high-speed internet, restaurant and lounge open daily, free local calls, free business center with wireless printing from the rooms, refriger-ator and microwave in every room, complimentary parking, Fit Club passes
8	Route 66 Hotel and Conference Center 625 E. Saint Joseph St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-6626 217-529=4666 rt66hotel.com	114	4	\$72 - \$150, (8 suites)	Chrissy Ruiter	Outdoor swimming pool, wireless internet service, in-room coffee maker, iron & hair dryer, on-site guest laundry, two-room suites available, free parking, bar on site, jacuzzi suites available, fridge and microwave in every room.
9	Candlewood Suites 2501 Sunrise Drive Springfield, IL 62703	217-522-5100 217-522=5101 candlewoodsuites.com	110	1	\$99.99 - \$129.99	Janie Deheve	Complimentary wireless high-speed Internet and full kitchens in spacious guest rooms for longer visits. Free laundry facilities, unlimited access to a state-of-the-art business center, an exercise room and the Candlewood Cupboard convenience store for meals and snacks., Green Certified hotel
10	Residence Inn Springfield South 2915 E. Stanford Avenue Springfield, IL 62703	217-527-1100 217-527=1101 residenceinnspringfieldil.com	108	1	\$149.99 - \$199.99	Darin Dame	Studios, 1-2 bedroom suites (w/ full kitchens, separate living space, work areas, sleeping areas), evening reception/social hour Mon.-Wed., 24 hr. fitness center, indoor pool, whirlpool, laundry facility, coffee in lobby, coffee/tea in-room, buffet breakfast, phone calls: toll-free, safe deposit boxes at front desk, pets allowed - contact hotel for details
11	Northfield Inn, Suites & Conference Center 3280 Northfield Drive Springfield, IL 62702	217-523-7900 217-523=7273 northfieldinn.com	105	8	\$89 - \$149	Marianne Zarndt	Free high-speed internet in Guestrooms and Conference Center. 13,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, fitness center & business center. Free extended Continental Breakfast. In-room coffee makers, refrig-erators, and microwaves. Jacuzzi Suites, Standard, and Accessible Rooms available. Free parking and indoor pool
12	Motel 6 6011 S. Sixth St. Rd. Springfield, IL 62712	217-529-1633 217-585=1271 motel6.com	104	0	\$39.99 - \$59.99	Jonathan Graham	Kids under 18 Stay Free (With Parents), Pets Welcome, Outdoor Pool, Free morning Coffee, Free Local Calls, WiFi, Guest Laundry, Cable with two HBO Channels and three ESPN Channels
13	Ramada Springfield North 3281 Northfield Drive Springfield, IL 62702	217-523-4000 217-523=4080 springfieldramada.com	97	2	\$89 - \$149	Marianne Zarndt	Complimentary Deluxe Continental Breakfast, Free Wi-Fi, All non-smoking hotel, Newly Updated Guest Rooms, Indoor Pool, Fit-ness Center, Refrigerator/Microwave in all rooms, Business Center, Jacuzzi Rooms, 32" flat screen TVs, guest laundry facilities
14	Comfort Suites 2620 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	217-753-4000 217-753=4166 comfortsuites.com	92	1	\$100 - \$110	Justin Hamilten	All rooms equipped with wet bar, refrigerator, microwave, whirlpool tubs, pull-out sofa bed, remote TV w/ DVD, free high-speed wireless internet access, separate work / leisure areas
15	Hampton Inn & Suites 2300 Chuckwagon Drive Springfield, IL 62707	217-793-7670 217-793=6522 hamptoninn.com	83	2	\$102-\$182	Darrin Thurman	Complimentary hot breakfast, indoor pool, 24-hr. fitness center, free high-speed internet, wireless internet, business center, 2-room suites, microwaves and refrigerators, Evening Sundowner Tues, Wed, Thurs in the reception area.
16	Staybridge Suites 4231 Schooner Drive Springfield, IL 62711	217-793-6700 217-793=6694 staybridge.com	82	1	\$124 - \$179, (all suite hotel)	John Voyles	Complimentary hot & cold breakfast, free wireless & hard wired in-ternet, free local calls, direct phone line w/ voice mail, indoor pool w/ jacuzzi, 24-hr. fitness center, convenience store, business ctr., complimentary evening social (m-th w/ soda, beer, wine & food), pets welcome
17	Comfort Inn & Suites 3675 S. Sixth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-8898 217-529=4354 comfortinn.com	80	1	\$100 - \$129	Joe Council	Cable/Satellite TV, Free Local Calls, Hair Dryer, In-Room Coffee Mak-er, in-room microwave and mini fridge
18	Howard Johnson Inn & Suites 1701 J. David Jones Parkway Springfield, IL 62702	217-541-8762 217-541=8774 hojo.com	79	3	\$69, \$89	Shailesh Parekh	Complimentary continental breakfast, free local calls, outdoor pool, 24 suites, truck parking, free wireless
19	Courtyard By Marriott 3462 Freedom Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-793-5300 217-793=5300 marriott.com	78	1	\$109.99 - \$179.99	Nathan Biermann	All non-smoking hotel, heated indoor pool, spa, exercise room, lounge, in-room coffee, iron, free high-speed wireless internet, restaurant - The Bistro, Starbuck's coffee, HD-TV in all rooms
19	Country Inn & Suites 3092 Stevenson Dr. Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-5151 217-544=5353 countryinns.com/springfieldil	78	1	\$119 - 199	Joe Gietl	Complimentary hot breakfast, 18 suites, refrigerator/microwave in every room, heated indoor pool, free WiFi, business center, free weekday newspaper, fitness center, airport shuttle service, Inn Case Market ™, Read It & Return Lending Library ™

Hotel industry sees recovery after slump

State budget crisis slowing recovery

BY ROBERTA CODEMO

State and local hotel tax revenues were up at the end of 2016, a sign that the hotel industry is recovering from the 2008-2009 recession.

Hotels are reporting positive growth this year, attributing it to increased business travel. Growth is projected to be slow, however, as state travel is down because of the ongoing budget crisis nearing its second full year.

Revenue from the state hotel tax increased to \$264 million in 2016, up \$7 million from \$257 million the previous year. Following a low of \$173 million in 2010, Illinois' hotel tax revenue seems to have recovered and even surpassed its pre-recession high, increasing by \$91 million from 2011 through 2016. In 2015 alone, statewide hotel tax revenue gained \$30 million over the previous year.

Data from the City of Springfield's hotel-motel tax shows \$3.7 million in city revenue for 2016. That's an uptick of about \$100,000 over 2015, when the city brought in \$3.6 million. Actual revenue beat the city's budget projections both years. Because the figures are from 2016 and prior years, they don't include an increase to the hotel tax passed earlier this year by the Springfield City Council.

The Courtyard by Marriott in Springfield reports positive growth this year, up 20.5 percent for the first quarter of 2017. In 2016, the hotel saw a 1.6 percent increase over 2015. Accounting for the hotel's renovation work last year, growth this year is actually up five percent.

The hotel's management company, TMI Hospitality, is forecasting continual positive growth in 2017 based on recent industry economic trends.

Nathan Biermann, general manager, says that Courtyard's success has always been loyal business travelers. The brand caters to their specific needs, like having the most up-to-date technology and amenities. Biermann adds that diversification in the hotel business is critical to ensure growth and stability.

Jason Thoron, complex director of sales and marketing for the Crowne Plaza Springfield and the Holiday Inn Express, says business is stagnant, with a slight uptick in occupancy rates while the average daily rates remain reduced. Thoron says the hotels have been buying business from one another or from other cities that are moving conventions to Springfield to avoid another market's pricing. However, he notes that both properties are exceeding Smith Travel Research's occupancy and average daily rate from prior years.

Twenty-five percent of the Crowne Plaza's business is state-related, Thoron says, and many state organizations have placed travel and conventions on hold due to funding uncertainty. The hotel has lost two large conventions because of cuts in grant funding, and several hotels in the market have lost room nights because of the coliseum closure at the Illinois State Fairgrounds.

The increase in occupancy rates seen in the first quarter comes from new business from other markets in the state. Thoron says that the Convention and Visitors Bureau continues to receive pressure from the Springfield Hotel and Lodging



Crowne Plaza located on Dirksen Drive

PHOTO / COURTESY OF CROWNE PLAZA

Association to produce room nights as government and state association business dries up.

The Illinois budget crisis is having a trickle-down effect, but the Crowne Plaza feels the industry is learning to adapt. Its hotel sales staff is focused on looking for new revenue generators, while operations staff is focused on looking for ways to streamline processes and conserve energy. The hotel has been able to adjust staffing levels to maintain guest services thanks to technological advances. The property is cross-training staff to perform multiple jobs and has become diligent in learning about peak check-in times and

unplanned meal functions for attendees.

Citing plans for an additional hotel at Legacy Pointe on the MacArthur Boulevard extension, Thoron says Springfield cannot continue to build hotel properties without additional room night generators because the Springfield and Decatur market is only running at 55.2 percent occupancy.

Without a significant increase in tourism or state business, additional hotel rooms coming online will only create further competition for limited dollars. Thoron hopes that Illinois will adopt a budget soon for the good of all businesses in Springfield. ♦



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	NAME / MEETING ADDRESS	PHONE / WEBSITE / EMAIL	MEETING TIME	NUMBER OF MEMBERS	CONTACT	DUES	YEAR EST'D
1	Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL) Sangamo Club 227 E. Adams St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-414-6220 iwil.biz membership@iwil.biz	11:30 am to 1 pm every third Thursday in the month except September, December, March and June- dates and times TBD	200+	Jennifer Sublett	Regular member: \$80	2004
1	ELEVATE Springfield Young Professionals Group The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce 1011 South Second Street Springfield, IL 62704	217-525-1173 www.ypspringfield.org sgraham@gsc.org	Various meetings/events throughout the year	200+	Sarah Graham	\$75 annually all events are free	2006
2	The Association for Women in Communications (meeting location varies)	awcspringfield.org president@awcspringfield.org	2nd Wednesday of the month	50	Dawn Tebrinke	\$25 plus national dues, various membership categories	1977
2	Tuesday Social Club Wyndham Springfield City Centre 700 E. Adams Springfield, IL 62701	www.springfieldinsider.com/tsc shawn@springfieldinsider.com	2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month at 9 am	50+	Shawn Scott	No dues	2017
3	Prospectors Referral Group Chesapeake Seafood House 3045 Clear Lake Ave Springfield, IL 62702	217-546-7310 tammykayehearn@aol.com	Wednesdays, 11:30 am, (1st & 3rd weeks)	36	Tammy Kaye Hearn	Lunch cost only	1999
4	McBrian Lincoln Douglas Toastmasters Club Our Savior's Lutheran Church 2645 Old Jacksonville Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-546-8624 mcbrianlincolndouglas.toastmasters.org randaln1@yahoo.com	Thursdays, 6 pm	28	Nate Randall	\$51/6 months	1936
5	Capital City Toastmasters IDOT Building (Hanley Building) 2300 Dirksen Parkway, Room 214A&B Springfield, IL 62764	217-698-8767 1313356.toastmastersclubs.org kathybrennan77@yahoo.com	Wednesdays, Noon	21	Kathy Brennan	\$46/6 months	2009
5	Central Illinois Networking Group Gem PR & Media 2121 W. White Oaks Dr. Springfield, IL 62704	dominic@henson-robinson.com	Every other Thursday 8 to 9 am	21	Dominic Carnduff	\$50 annual	2010
6	Noontime Toastmasters Laurel United Methodist Church 631 South Grand Ave W. Springfield, IL 62704	217-414-7378 noontime.toastmastersclubs.org stormwolff@ymail.com	Mondays, Noon	20	Storm Wolff	\$53/6 months	1998
7	The Network Group The Sangamo Club 227 E. Adams St. Springfield, IL 62701	217-496-3686 edclarkphoto@casscom.com	2nd Tuesday of the month, 11:45 am	19	Ed Clark	Lunch costs only / \$90 twice a year	2000
8	League of Our Own Toastmasters Club Springfield Urban League Inc 100 N. 11th St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-789-0830 Ext. 1126 1179206.toastmastersclubs.org lhemingway@springfieldul.org	Fridays, 11:30 am (2nd & 4th weeks)	16	Larry Hemingway, Sr.	\$10.50/mo.	2008
9	BNI of Central Illinois 3603 W. Bennington Ct. Peoria, IL 61615	309-453-2463 BNI-IL.com jeff@bni-il.com	BNI Capital City – Tuesday 7:30 am Schnuck's On Iles BNI Business Insiders – Wed 7:45 am Jay Davis Country Financial BNI Business Builders – Thurs 7:30 am Schnuck's on Iles BNI Thurs Lunch – Thurs 11:30 am Brickhouse Grill & Pub	15-25 per chapter	Jeff Ensinger	\$445/ year. First year fee for Books & Training of \$150	2007 2011 2013 2000 2000

Getting the Insider scoop on everything Springfield

BY ERIC WOODS

For anyone who needs a positive jump start, Shawn Scott produces a short video on his website each morning to get people motivated and thinking as they start their day. It's just one part of Scott's vision for an all-inclusive site known as Springfield-Insider.com, which is focused on bringing Springfield's citizens and businesses together.

Originally from Pekin, Scott initially went to college for accounting after serving in the military, but he soon found himself in computer programming courses. This new skill led him to creating a not-for-profit, where he spent several years taking veterans who suffered from PTSD on adventure trips. He lived out of a camper for more than a year and traveled around the country in support of his organization.

Scott recalled. "We had a number of members, both veterans and non-veterans," Scott recalled.

Soon, Scott decided to settle down, and he and his family moved back to central Illinois in July 2016. That fall, Scott's plan for Springfield Insider was first initiated. He wanted to create a site where people in Springfield could easily collect and digest information.

"I want to take pertinent events and activities and put them all in one place," he said.

Scott, who is also a Chamber Ambassador for the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, believes that Springfield needs to have a place that consolidates the bottleneck of information available.

"Right now, people have to go to a number of different places," he said. "I want a site of endless information in Springfield."

The website, which is sponsored by Local First Springfield, houses event announcements as well as local business offerings.

Scott has seen the struggles faced by Springfield in an economy which has hurt a number of industries. He feels that these issues should be tackled by regular individuals instead of the government, and he has a desire to focus on key industries that may not be as well represented in the capital city as others. Scott hopes to give underrepresented industries an outlet to

promote their creations.

A significant piece of Scott's vision for Springfield Insider is the Tuesday Social Club, a relationship-building group that meets twice each month. The first monthly meeting includes a speaker who gives a 10- to 20-minute presentation with information that members can take with them. Meeting in small, random groups takes up the rest of the first and second monthly gatherings.

"During the second monthly meeting, we focus on socializing and building relationships," he said. "I assign groups of four to five people and give each group an icebreaker to get the people talking."

Scott wants to see people move away from the selfish and toward the selfless by helping them foster relationships that will benefit all parties. Starting with seven people at the very first meeting, the group now tops 30 people. That rapid growth forced a move to the Wyndham Springfield City Centre in March, where Scott plans to remain for the foreseeable future.

Scott says Springfield Insider has been very well received.

"I am trying to pull passionate people not from government out of the woodwork," he said. "If anyone has a passion and wants to see a change in Springfield, please reach out." ♦



Shawn Scott with his wife and daughter

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE



Tuesday Social Club networking group

PHOTO / PATRICK YEAGLE

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MEDICAL NEWS

HSHS to open clinic in Sherman

HSHS Medical Group is opening a new primary care clinic in Sherman.

Melinda Clark, CEO of HSHS Medical Group, says the clinic will employ one physician and three other employees. Located at 2806 E. Andrews Road, the clinic will offer same-day appointments, laboratory work, chronic illness management and more. Clark says it's a priority for HSHS to have a strong

primary care presence in the communities it serves.

"By developing the new clinic in the Sherman area, HSHS Medical Group is meeting the mission of the Hospital Sisters," Clark said.

Construction on the clinic is expected to finish in June, with the site opening in mid-July.

Vibra Hospital of Springfield announces a new CEO.

Vibra Hospital of Springfield has recently announced a new CEO.

Brett Johnson comes to Vibra from Ohio, where he most recently served as CEO of Regency Hospital in Sylvania. Johnson has served more than 20 years in administration of skilled nursing facilities.

"It is an honor and a privilege for me to lead a hospital that has served the community so well for seven years," Johnson said.

"I look forward to working with the physicians, nurses, employees, leadership and the executive team at Vibra Hospital of Springfield to ensure the best care for the patients we serve."

Opened in 2013, Vibra is a 50-bed hospital at 701 N. Walnut St. offering long term acute care for critically ill patients with chronic illnesses requiring extended recovery.



New assisted living facility planned on Old Jacksonville Road

A new 73-unit assisted living facility is planned for Old Jacksonville Road in Springfield.

Dover Development, LLC plans to build Cedarhurst of Springfield Assisted Living and Memory Care on Old Jacksonville Road, just west of Koke Mill Road.

The \$12 million facility is expected to be 65,000 square feet, creating an estimated 50 jobs.

The company is currently battling with the City of Springfield over interpretation of a city ordinance that will decide whether the new facility has direct access to Old Jacksonville Road.

The Sangamon County Land Development and Subdivision Planning Committee is scheduled to consider the plans at its June 8 meeting.

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Know your liability for snow and ice removal



A business owner shovels his entry way.

PHOTO / ISTOCK

BY THOMAS C. PAVLIK JR.

Although it doesn't seem quite timely given that we're approaching summer, property owners need to be concerned about snow and ice removal - specifically with the legal implications of whether and how one undertakes such a task. Thankfully, a recent Illinois Supreme Court case helps clarify the law.

As a general rule, property owners have no common law duty to remove natural accumulations of snow and ice. What's a natural accumulation? It's the presence of snow and ice as delivered by the weather and untouched by man.

For commercial property owners who nonetheless decide to clear snow and ice, they can be held liable if they do so negligently. For example, if a commercial property owner piles up snow next to the entrance door where it's likely to melt and cause someone to slip, the owner has probably acted negligently and could be held liable for any injuries. Said another way, the owner has created an unnatural accumulation and is now responsible for the logical consequences.

Recognizing that it's good public policy to encourage property owners to voluntarily remove snow and ice, Illinois passed a law in 1979 called the Snow and Ice Removal Act. It applies only to residential property owners and not to commercial property owners. The Act states that such residential property owners can't be held liable for snow and ice removal (salting, snow blowing, plowing, shoveling, etc.) unless they've done so in a "willful and wanton" manner. The willful and wanton standard is pretty close to intentional wrong doing. Think of someone who takes all the snow off of a driveway and piles it next to the driver side door of a car, making it hazardous for someone to enter. But negligence, which is defined as a failure to observe a standard of reasonable care, gets immunity under the Act. So most homeowners won't be held liable if they voluntarily remove snow and ice, even if they do so negligently.

That's a good thing here in Springfield, because unlike common law, the City has an ordinance requiring property owners to remove snow and ice after a significant weather event. The Springfield ordinance applies to both residential and commercial owners and states that by 10 a.m. the day after a snow fall "sidewalks in front of and adjoining" the premises have to be cleared of snow and ice. If that's not possible, the ordinance says sand,

ashes or sawdust should be used.

Turning back to the Snow and Ice Removal Act, the immunity it provides makes it very difficult to bring a claim against a property owner for injuries resulting from a fall on snow or ice. In that regard, and as sometimes happens in the law, various courts throughout Illinois took different views of the scope of immunity provided by the Act. Some courts limited immunity to negligent shoveling and removal only. Other courts extended the coverage provided by the Act so that it included the negligent design of the building or sidewalk itself that caused a dangerous condition. For example, a property owner can create an unnatural accumulation of snow or ice because of improperly placed downspouts or gutters or changes to the grade and surface of sidewalks and driveways.

That's one of the reasons we have a Supreme Court - to help address what lawyers call a "split in the circuits," where one court rules one way and another court rules another way. To the extent possible, one goal of the law is uniformity and predictability, so the Illinois Supreme Court cleared up the dispute in a case titled *Murphy-Hylton v. Lieberman Management Services*.

In *Murphy-Hylton*, the plaintiff fell on ice she claimed formed because of a negligently designed sloping sidewalk and unnatural conditions created by defective downspout drainage. The defense - a condominium complex - claimed that the Act afforded it immunity from liability.

A unanimous Supreme Court found that "The Snow and Ice Removal Act provides immunity to residential property owners from claims of liability for injuries allegedly caused by icy sidewalks that result from negligent snow and ice removal efforts, but it does not extend to immunize them from claims of liability for injuries allegedly caused by icy sidewalks that result from an otherwise negligent failure to maintain the premises."

Said another way, the court held that the law doesn't automatically shield property owners from liability for negligence related to snow and ice. If the facts don't involve natural accumulation, and instead relate to some other negligent act that caused the injury, the common law standard analysis - exercise of reasonableness under the conditions - is still the law. ♦

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

You'll want to tarry at Mick and Mary's

BY THOMAS C. PAVLIK JR.

For our restaurant review this month, we de-camped to Thayer, which was only a 20 minute drive, truth be told. It turned out to be well worth the short trip, because Mick and Mary's is a gem of a place at the location of what was Thayer's oldest business – the former Maggie's.

Over the years, Maggie's had struggled, but it was once known for family-style spaghetti, fried chicken and its homemade Italian dressing, before going dark in 2013. In March, Mick and Mary's resurrected the best of the former Maggie's and has even managed to improve on it.

Mick and Mary's is owned by food guys; the owners have worked at Panther Creek, Lime Street, Tuscany and Mario's.

I visited as part of a board of directors meeting for a local business. We arrived together around 6:30 and marched in with our folders and iPad. One of the owners warmly greeted us and showed us to a back room where we could have our meeting in private. There were quite a few other diners there, and we no doubt drew some stares.

There's plenty of seating and a nice bar where food is served as well. There's nothing fancy about the physical structure itself. Decoration is minimal, with some throwbacks to past occupants of the building smattered about. But you come to Mick and Mary's for the home cooking and efficient service, not the ambience, and Mick and Mary's has plenty of the former. It's not a complicated menu, and lots of the

food is fried. (Warning: you'll leave with a pleasing aroma of fried food.) But you can see that the menu was planned with care, and we were told that everything was made from scratch on the premises.

We started out with a round of drinks. Although Mick and Mary's had Sambuca, it inexplicably had no scotch. A few of us were momentarily stunned, but we quickly regrouped and found an acceptable alternative. We hope that they start stocking the stuff soon.

For starters, we tried a few orders of the gizzards (\$8) and the Cajun wings (\$8). When they appeared, there was no doubt they had been prepared moments before in fresh oil. The helpings were generous, and everything was well-seasoned. We were also served sides of Cajun hot sauce and ranch. Our group is generally pretty talkative, so the silence that reigned as we dug in told me that everyone was pleased.

We then turned to the entrees. Most entrees come as a dinner – which means diners are entitled to a salad, cottage cheese or apple sauce, baked potato or French fries, and a side of spaghetti. Considering that the most expensive dinner entrée is \$22, Mick and Mary's is a bargain. Want to bring some young ones with you? There's a separate kids menu that also looked like a good value.

We managed to cover pretty much the entirety of Mick and Mary's menu, which included the one-piece pork chop dinner (\$12 or \$15 for two – trust me, one's enough), the breaded chicken dinner (\$12 or \$15 for two), the ribeye

dinner (\$22), the spaghetti dinner (\$12, served only with a side salad), an all-dark-meat chicken dinner (\$12 for two pieces), and the whole catfish (\$17).

There's no doubt that Mick and Mary's ended up with the original Italian salad dressing recipe – plenty of acid with just a hint of sweetness. I'm usually not one for over-dressed lettuce, but this is an exception. I noticed some of my fellow board members sopping up the excess with the homemade bread sticks.

The main dishes followed shortly thereafter, and it was a lot of food. The side of spaghetti was quite generous and had just the right amount of grease. If you're reading this, Mick and Mary's, invest in some crushed red pepper for those who like to add some heat.

Although I passed on the applesauce, those who tried all agreed that it was homemade – much like the side of green beans that somehow appeared in front of each diner.

Our main proteins were all excellent. My pork chop was thick, juicy and well-seasoned. Two would have been overkill. The ribeye looked like it was cooked perfectly medium rare as requested and was reported as quite flavorful. Perhaps the biggest praise was lavished on the chicken. It looked and smelled delicious. Those who opted for it were uniform in their praise, especially for the dark meat pieces. None of my fellow diners who went with the spaghetti managed to eat it all –not because it wasn't good, but simply because the portion was too big. I think desserts were available, but by that

point we were all satiated. Service was attentive and efficient. We all appreciated that we were left alone for the business portion of our evening. Mick and Mary's might not be everyone's idea of a business dinner, but for a more low-key meal, if you're willing to take a short drive to the country, Mick and Mary's is just the ticket. We all agreed we'd be back. ♦

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 an annual meeting on Thursday, June 15 at Panther Creek Country Club from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Join us lakeside for a fun girl's night out! To register or for more information, visit www.iwil.biz or contact Deb Sarsany at 217-313-0580.

Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois (WE-CI)

WE-CI will be hosting a summer social on Wednesday, June 14 from 5:30-7 p.m. at Island Bay Yacht Club. All current and prospective members are invited for a fun evening of networking. WE-CI is an organization dedicated to encouraging and supporting women who own or operate businesses in the Central Illinois area. The cost for this meeting will be: \$20 (\$25 for walk-ins). This will include the buffet dinner. A cash bar will be available. Reservations can be made through Friday, June 9 by emailing reservations@we-ci.org, or online at www.wei-ci.org

Association for Women in Communications (AWC)

AWC will hold a networking social event on Thursday, June 8 at 5:30 p.m. at Boone's Salon. Current and prospective members are invited to attend and meet other business professionals. 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. For more information or to make a reservation, visit www.awcspringfield.org.

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Arterial roadway update a promising sign

BY CHRIS HEMBROUGH
President and CEO
Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce

Good development policy is important to economic growth. This might sound obvious, but the understanding of this concept is not yet universal. While developments can fail due to market conditions, our community’s goal should be to help control what we can control, and to decrease risk and provide certainty in the development process.

We applaud the City of Springfield for taking a more proactive approach in this with the recent changes to the Large Scale Development process of the Land Subdivision Ordinance. This action represents a willingness to not just talk about improving the development process, but is an attempt to enact policy changes to make Springfield a better place for future development. This kind of action should take place on a regular basis in the form of making improvements to ordinances, administrative action, or updating planning documents.

In 2012, a partnership among the City of Springfield, the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission and representatives of the private sector development community was created to look at enhancing the land development process. The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, the Springfield Area Home Builders Association and Capital Area Realtors, plus local developers and engineers, all worked together to provide input about changes that could help improve the Land Subdivision Ordinance. At that time, the Arterial Roadway Network Plan had not been updated for nearly 17 years. The next year, in 2013, the plan

was updated through the same process between the public and private sector development community, and it was recommended that it be reviewed again every four years.

This year the public and private sectors are again working together on updating the Arterial Roadway Network Plan. While many have never heard of this document, it can affect the design and planning of a development and the right-of-way required. It also triggers Springfield’s “developers’ agreement,” which increases the cost of development while rarely providing a benefit. The planning document, which most people don’t even know exists, can greatly affect a potential development. The public and private sectors continue to work together to make our community a better place for investment.

Every community should continually make incremental improvements in development policy, not because it is a magical solution for economic growth, but because it is something every community should do in order to be competitive with other communities. It’s equivalent to being professional and showing up on time; it’s expected.

In order for Springfield and Sangamon County to grow and prosper, our state must get its act together, our community’s private sector must grow to help diversify our economy, and we must improve our ability to retain our young people and attract others for our workforce needs. However, since some of those items are out of our control, our community must work together and address the issues we can to help our community grow and prosper. ♦

Rauner’s property tax freeze is a game of kick the can

BY PATRICK YEAGLE

In a recent campaign email, Gov. Bruce Rauner told supporters that “The biggest issue that now stands in the way of us reaching an agreement is resistance to freezing your property taxes.”

In short, the governor is blocking adoption of a state budget to get a concession which will create a new problem.

Rauner, whom I regard as a smart man, is either forgetting the role of property taxes in Illinois or is shrewdly using the issue as a political wedge in the budget crisis. In case it’s the former, let me refresh the governor’s memory.

Illinois property taxes pay primarily for schools. Rauner is very familiar with schools. He loves photo opportunities in classrooms, and schools are one of the very few budget items he didn’t veto at the start of this crisis.

For Springfield Public Schools, local property taxes make up about 50 percent of the total budget, while state funding only contributes about 34 percent. (The remaining 16 percent is federal dollars.) The only one of those three funding sources over which school districts have some control is property taxes. So when the state funding to schools is inadequate, guess where schools turn to make up the difference. Now, Rauner wants to cut off that avenue, too.

There is already a mechanism within state law to control property tax growth. Each year, a school district can only raise its property tax levy by five percent (not five percentage points) or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. To raise the levy more than five percent, the school district must ask permission from voters via referendum.

Being the nerd I am, I couldn’t help but build a spreadsheet of my home’s fair market value and tax amount from 1997 to 2016.

It turns out that the taxes for my home have only risen \$360 over the past 19 years (less than the rate of inflation), even though my home has gained more than \$15,000 in value. That seems like a bargain to me.

The people I hear complaining most about property taxes seem to live in wealthy areas with expensive houses. Rauner is no exception. His home in Winnetka and the land on which it sits are collectively valued at \$4,197,710, for which he paid \$81,967.28 in 2015 and will likely pay \$90,164 for 2016. (The first installment of \$45,082 has been paid, but the second isn’t due yet.)

That’s a lot of money, so I understand why Rauner might see this issue as a pressing problem for Illinois. However, I find it difficult to feel sorry for him, knowing that he earns hundreds of millions of dollars per year and freely chose to live in a \$4-million home. I thought Republicans were the party of personal responsibility.

My own property taxes for 2016 were \$1,641. I don’t own an expensive house, but my wife and I have no problem – on our budget or on principle – paying our share. It’s just part of the social compact John Locke taught me about.

The real problem is that freezing property taxes means schools won’t be able to increase their levies to make up for inflation, meaning purchasing power will decrease. Without the state boosting its school funding at the same time, schools will suffer, which means children will suffer. Freezing property taxes may help someone somewhere, but it will likely cause more harm than good.

If Rauner is such a fan of schools, perhaps he should spend more time in one than it takes to get some campaign photos. Perhaps then he would learn that quality education is an investment in the future, not a burden to be dumped in someone else’s lap. ♦



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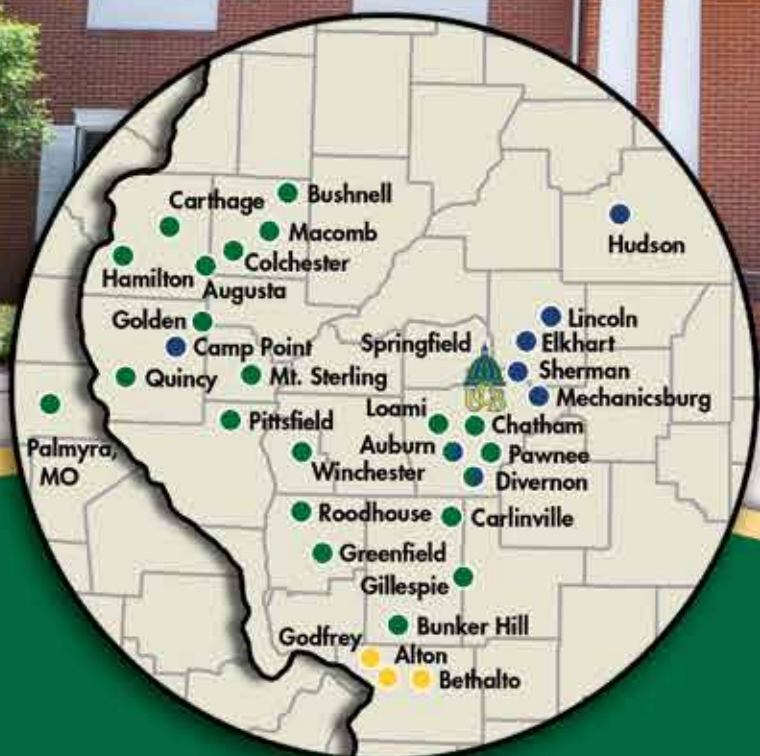


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