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Trends in web design

Companies adapt to a remote workforce





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In this issue:

SBJ articles



Sky's the limit by Rachel Otwell



Trends in web design by Holly Whisler



City surveys residents to determine internet needs by Carey Smith

14 Technology List • 22 Security List



Q&A with Laurie King

Cover photo by Norma Zuniga

Columns

27 Ask an attorney By Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.

32 Professional development By Kristina Barbee

- 30 Medical news
- **36** Restaurant review By Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.

28 Philanthropy By Janet Seitz

34 Calendar

40 New businesses

Finding our balance

When our regular routines were upended in March 2020, most of us suddenly found ourselves a lot less busy than we had been before. There were no work obligations, social events or kids' activities, and travel for both business and leisure was postponed. While social isolation sometimes took its toll, many people appreciated having time to catch their breath. A number of people I've interviewed lately for Biz Bites have told me about starting a new business or changing careers during the pandemic, which gave them time to focus on what they really wanted to do.

Technology allowed us to continue our lives with some semblance of normalcy and became even more critical for work, school and entertainment. The city of Springfield is one of many municipalities nationwide now looking at how to make broadband access more equitable since it has become a necessity in dayto-day life (pg. 18).

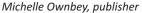
While companies are starting to bring workers back to the office, many businesses have also invested in technology to better support remote workers who need to be able to communicate with management and each other (pg. 26). However, while technology can enable you to use your computer and phone as if you were sitting in your office chair, there is no way to replicate the dozens of small human interactions that occur on a daily basis when people are sharing a workspace.

Perhaps there is a way to strike a balance between the efficiency that comes from working with no distractions and the collaboration and sense of community that results from co-workers talking to each other on a daily basis. Zoom has become a part of our daily lives, and many things can be accomplished via a 30-minute Zoom meeting instead of spending 30 minutes in the car just to get somewhere to have a meeting. But for topics that require thoughtful discussion, particularly among multiple parties, there's no substitute for being in the same room and having body language to go along with verbal communication. Perhaps we can continue to Zoom for the quick, easy discussions and still gather in-person for the deeper conversations.

Likewise, it is a joy to be able to attend concerts and theater performances again, to travel to see family and friends that we have missed over the past 18 months and to have social gatherings, but it is also a relief to not have an obligation every single night of the week. Can we find a way to resume our normal lives while still allowing time to pursue our passions? Can we strike a balance between the convenience of technology and the need for interpersonal relationships?

Matt Mullenweg, the entrepreneur and web developer best known for creating WordPress, said, "Technology is best when it brings people together." So are offices and meeting rooms.







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By Lana Shovlin

with Laurie King

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Laurie King began her career as a social studies teacher at Auburn Middle School, but made an abrupt career shift when she joined the technology firm of MSF&W. After nearly two decades with the company, she became president and CEO in 2019. The information systems consulting firm has more than doubled in size over the past five years.

Where were you born?

I was born in Mankato, Minnesota, but spent the first 12 years of my life in Wisconsin. In 1976, I moved to Auburn, Illinois, and ended up marrying a farmer. We raised our children in Auburn, and I taught in the Auburn School District for quite a few years before I quit teaching and started my job here at Marucco, Stoddard, Ferenbach & Walsh, Inc. I just celebrated my 20th anniversary with the firm.

What did you want to be when you were younger?

I always wanted to be a lawyer, so I got my bachelor's degree in administration of justice from Southern Illinois University. My plan was that after graduation I would attend law school and become a lawyer, but my husband farms in Auburn and when you have farmland, you're beholden to it. So, instead of going to law school, I got my teaching certificate in social studies, did my student teaching in Auburn, accepted a job as the seventh and eighth grade social studies teacher and taught for the next decade or so.

How did you end up at MSF&W?

I loved teaching, but it was time for a change. I knew somebody at MSF&W, and I sent them my resume to look over. It had been so long since I'd done anything other than teaching, and I wanted someone to give me an idea of where I stood, professionally speaking. As it turned out, they needed a trainer for a new software product and someone to help proofread proposals. My background in education gave me experience with both of those things, and because of that, I was hired on in a sales and marketing-type role.

How did that career transition go?

I'll never forget coming into the office that first day, sitting down with the owners to talk about their business and excusing myself to the ladies room, where I sat down, cried and wondered what I had just done! I was a tenured teacher at Auburn and I could have retired from there, but honestly, I knew that it was just a comfort zone. With that realization, I called on myself to put my big girl pants on and start learning the ropes. At some point, one of the owners gave me a book of IT acronyms, and I would sit and read it and try to figure out what all those words and abbreviations meant.

Has that experience impacted the way you screen prospective employees?

Absolutely! I credit the firm for taking a chance on me, especially John Marucco and Duke Stoddard. They knew that I didn't have a degree in computer science or a business background, but I think they gave a lot of thought about what I could bring to the job. They could tell that I was ready to jump in with both feet and wasn't afraid of trying something new.

We get a lot of resumes from people with degrees and backgrounds in computer science, but every once in a while we'll get one from someone who has a high school education. That doesn't necessarily mean it goes in the no pile, though, because chances are that it belongs to someone who has worked really hard to get where they are in life. We always want to talk to people like that.

What's something interesting about you that we wouldn't learn from reading your resume?

A few years ago, my husband and I did the Tour de Mont Blanc, which is a 111-mile hike through France, Italy and Switzerland. Each day, we would hike 11-20 miles and there were times when I thought, "What in the world did I do? I can't do this!" I had blisters on top of blisters, and at night we would shower and fall into bed, completely exhausted.

We did it, though – it was phenomenal! I love that feeling of getting out in the open, enjoying the peace and quiet, climbing a mountain and high-fiving my husband, knowing that we accomplished something amazing.

Do you have a life motto?

I'm a huge Avett Brothers fan, and my motto is inspired by lyrics to one of their songs: "Decide what to be, and go be it." Life isn't about making a lot of money; it's about doing what you love and giving it your all. If you're a garbage man, be the best damn garbage man out there. If you're a teacher, be the best teacher ever. If you're the boss? Be the best boss your employees could ever have.

If you could give your younger self one piece of advice, what would it be? Trust your instincts! Deep down, you always know what's right.



Left to right: Bob Ferenbach, Darrell "Duke" Stoddard and John Marucco were the original owners of MSF&W. The company moved into its current location in 1996. John Marucco and Duke Stoddard still have partial ownership but in 2019, Laurie King became president and CEO with majority ownership of the company. PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAURIE KING

SKY'S THE LIMIT

Lisa Clemmons Stott is staying focused on Springfield's future

By Rachel Otwell

After a six-year term as the executive director for Downtown Springfield Inc. (DSI) Lisa Clemmons Stott is setting her sights on new ways to help Springfield grow. "I was always interested in relationships and therefore politics," Clemmons Stott told Illinois Times. She graduated from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1994 with a journalism degree. "I grew up reading Mike Royko in the paper. I was one of those geeky kids who read the paper front to back, every single day." She grew up in Chenoa, a small town between Bloomington and Joliet. She landed in Springfield after taking a legislative internship to explore the "underbelly of politics."

Her past positions include development director for the Springfield public radio station, director of marketing and communications for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and a communications role with the Illinois Secretary of State, among others. Clemmons Stott lives in Springfield with husband Sean and son Ethan, who recently graduated from Springfield High School.

Illinois Times invited her to reflect on her tenure leading the city's downtown development nonprofit and to share what's next. The following has been edited for length and clarity.

What does downtown represent to you?

Downtown is the face of Sangamon County. The majority of people who come to Springfield visit our downtown and judge us based on the quality of their experience. It is the only mixed-use neighborhood in our community, which means there are shops and there are places to live all intermixed. That provides great opportunities



and great challenges. It's a very special place. It's our history. It's also our future.

What was the status of DSI when you took over in December of 2015? What did you choose to keep? What did you choose to change?

When I took over, DSI had experienced almost going under because the organization was reliant on two weather-dependent street festivals. The festivals had been wildly successful for years. They showed downtown was safe and fun. But there were bad-weather incidents and DSI lost a lot of money.

When they hired me I had a mandate to make the organization fiscally sustainable. Also, DSI is a Main Street organization, which means it's part of the National Main Street network. There are four pillars that Main Street believes create community and economic development: organization, design, promotion and economic vitality. Economic vitality is always the most complicated part, and I came in with the charge to focus on it.

I inherited an organization that was strong as far as our volunteer corps and people who care. When I started making my first visits to some of

SPRINGFIELD BUSINESS JOURNAL

our corporate sponsors it was clear they looked at DSI as just a party planner. That intensified my belief that we needed to focus on the economic development issues and have that come to the forefront.

How does city leadership help or hinder development plans for downtown? Is there too much bureaucracy?

As far as too much bureaucracy – actually, it's the opposite problem. I have never been in a situation where a decision involving downtown didn't have to involve one person – that person being the mayor. It seems common sense that it would be difficult for one person to have a finger on every single thing that needs to happen in a city. I've worked in large bureaucracies. Top-down management is not always the way to go. You want a clear vision from leadership but you really need to enable people in directorships and other positions to do their work. Waiting for the approval from one person can slow down progress. There are only 24 hours in the day, no matter how amazing one person is.

For example, early on in my tenure, I was lucky enough to have an urban planner with DSI who did an analysis of downtown's public spaces. He saw that the Old State Capitol Plaza is one of the few spaces of its kind left in the U.S. So how do you maximize that? One of the things we kept hearing about was how unsafe it felt. Lighting wasn't robust. There were people lounging around 24/7.

That's a central hub in the downtown district. So we put together a plan to activate it. We raised private donations to add lights, colorful tables and chairs like you would see in New York City, games and a ping-pong table.

It took nine months to get the city to okay it. It is now one of the number one spots where people take pictures. When I see people having lunch out there, it brings me so much joy. It's such a simple thing that the heart of a city should have.

The pandemic, terrible as it has been, added momentum to some creative problem solving, for example shutting down a portion of Adams Street during the weekends to better allow for social distance. Street performances are popular there, as is the outdoor seating for bar patrons. But the city decided it will open the street back up after installing parklets – outdoor seating areas in former parking spaces. What are your reflections over this debate?

What's happening with Adams Street is a growth problem. Maybe some people don't realize that downtown is having growth problems. We are having conversations about the nightlife versus living in an apartment. That is amazing. That is where we need to be. It's all about how you have the conversations. The specific decision to close down Adams Street and then to not keep it closed was probably more nuanced than what was publicized.

What are some other ways that we could tackle the need for a street that wants to be very pedestrian-friendly? There are a lot of different ways that one can approach the issue. How about making the sidewalks huge on that street, so that businesses can have seating out all the time, without closing down any of the street?

I was glad that people were excited to see the things we were trying to pilot and were embracing them. There are real-world issues sometimes after you pilot something that need to be worked through. I hope the conversation continues because I think there's a lot of other creative solutions that would address the needs, get people excited and make a great experience.

Redeveloping historic, older buildings has been one of your passions. How have you worked to get developers to invest?

The question is how do you get to the point where large building developers are attracted to your community. So we started working on the philosophy that if we get all the small buildings renovated and turned into apartments, then we will attract a larger business. Until we have more residents, there's no way a Whole Foods is coming downtown, for instance. So that's why we started the Momentum on Main Street program.

The mission of that program is to attract the next generation of property developers, investors and entrepreneurs. During COVID, some property owners realized it was now or never and lowered their prices. About a dozen buildings changed hands during COVID, which was a real sign of future life. A lot of the new owners are coming out of that Momentum on Main Street program and that philosophy.

DSI has been focusing on smaller buildings and on local people investing in them, and trying to demystify the process for how to do that. That's why we went after and received a Johanna Favrot Grant from the National Trust. It means we can bring in experts to do analysis on different types of buildings and share information about downtown development that includes a deep dive into financing, which is the puzzle.

The thing about downtown Springfield is that our cost of living is so good – it's not like Denver where you're going to flip a historic building and make a bunch of money right away. It is a longterm investment, which is we why need families and younger people who want to plant their flag here. We're trying to give them all the tools they need and the network to do that.

What do you hear about rent prices – are they generally fair for those seeking space to live or run a business?

On the residential side, it's really about what type of lifestyle that you want. If you want to walk to the train station and the farmers market as part of your lifestyle, then our rent prices are in line. A lot of people make decisions about proximity to work – prices are in line.

On the business side, downtown has a reputation for being expensive. But I've heard from numerous people who own property downtown as well as out west that downtown prices are actually under the prices on the west side. Downtown space is usually between \$10 to \$12 a square foot – probably a little less in some places. And downtown is starting to attract more property owners who are willing to make a deal in order to have a vacancy be filled.

What's next for you? Can you tell us more about why you left DSI and whether you plan to stay in Springfield?

Throughout my career I have specialized in change management – a leadership practice where you have to significantly change an organization. And I spent six years doing change management at DSI. When you look at the history of organizations, change managers aren't the people who stay forever. I accomplished a lot of what I was asked to accomplish, and felt some of the other things that I want to accomplish wouldn't best be served by my serving as DSI's director.

I am exploring my options. I'll be getting my son to college in September. The Illinois Public Health Association is running our region's community navigator grant, to help inform small businesses about relief funds available to them through the state, and I have a consulting contract to help with that through December. After that I will drill down and figure out what's next for me.

Springfield is a great place to raise a family. If you want to travel or work with clients across the country, the cost of living is low here and we are centrally located. I believe so much in the people here. There are so many amazing people in this town who have great ideas. Being a part of unleashing people's abilities is something that's very fun for me. I'm very interested in getting involved in other neighborhoods and helping them as well. I have lived in Springfield longer than I have lived anywhere else. It is my home now.

This article originally appeared in the July 22, Illinois Times. Contact Rachel Otwell at rotwell@ illinoistimes.com.



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Mark Roberts, founder of GoWeb1.com.

PHOTO BY NORMA ZUNIGA

TRENDS IN WEB DESIGN

SMALLER SITES AND GREATER SECURITY BECOME THE PRIMARY FOCUS

By Holly Whisler

"Within the last 12-18 months there has been a shift in the web design industry," said Crista Gebhardt, manager and director of web design and development at e-websmart, 830 South Grand Ave. "It used to be, 'the bigger the website the better,' but now it's about downsizing" and having the least number of clicks as possible. As a result, she said, "The most popular website trend is the microsite, which has only one to four pages." Its concise wording relays only basic information and a call to action, because, "at the end of the day, you want people to reach out," Gebhardt explained.

Eric Enlow, senior visual communication specialist with Levi, Ray and Shoup, Inc., 2401 W. Monroe St., agreed that in web design, "the pendulum swings back and forth." For example, Enlow explained a popular design style that used textures and shadows to recreate the tactile, threedimensional appearance of things like buttons, clocks and notepads has now shifted toward a flat design where everything is clean and simple, stripping away a lot of the complicated visuals previously used. Additionally, Enlow said current web design also incorporates "soft shadows and subtle gradients to build a sense of depth while still having a simplified, modern look." Another trend is subtle animation, which includes "website elements fading in as the user scrolls down the page, interesting hover states for clickable elements and parallax scrolling where a background image moves at a slightly different speed than the rest of the page as the user scrolls down," according to Enlow. "All of these minor details add to a user's impression of the website and the business it represents. These moments of delight' keep people invested – they enjoy the experience, and that improves engagement with calls to action."

When designing a website for clients that may not have access to high-resolution photos, Enlow said the trend is to use abstract art composition. This design style utilizes abstract shapes such as squares, circles and rectangles arranged in interesting ways, placed on wavy background textures to create visual interest and depth in a website without needing to rely on stock photos that can come across as seeming insincere or dated. Abstract compositions can feel unique and timeless.

Enlow said another trend is to use illustrations which "give websites a unique, engaging look and can be customized to perfectly suit a client's brand. Illustrations can also be animated to breathe more life into a page."

SBJ SPECIAL SECTION

The use of comfortable colors is another current design trend. Enlow explained, "While the client's brand ultimately drives the color palette, some colors are best-suited for accents. We generally use subtler color shades for backgrounds to create visually pleasing pages that will not strain a user's eye as they read large blocks of content."

On that note, Gebhardt said a trend that has been gaining traction is making sure websites are compliant with guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act. A person that is visually impaired, people learning another language or the elderly may use a screen reader, a piece of assistive technology that deciphers information on a webpage. She explained, "It's important that the website be clear and concise so that the reader can decipher information easily. Colors that are too busy are distracting to the reader. You want all site visitors to have a good experience."

Mark Roberts, founder of GoWeb1.com, 400 South Grand Ave. West, agreed. "It's important to consider ADA guidelines when creating new web tools. We have the ability to launch tools that provide a layer on top of a website that allows anyone to change sites to fit their needs."

Roberts suggested considering the dual nature

of websites. "We find that companies typically view their websites as customer-facing, but the real ROI is in the operations of daily business," he said. "This plays well with the remote workforce where companies need web applications to help operate their remote teams and allow them to work from home and be productive as they collaborate."

Roberts noted that a website can be structured to allow employees to login to a web-based portal, working on projects and collaborating with their work teams.

Roberts emphasized the importance of security from this standpoint. "A great need exists to focus on solutions that are security-driven," he said. "You want to allow specific team members to have access to certain parts of the company's website where they can pull reports or collaborate within a business unit, but they would not have access to look within the files of other departments." Roberts noted that a manager could be granted greater access and an owner would have complete access to company files, for example.

Although technology trends change, people are adapting rapidly as technology plays an increasingly essential role in our professional and private lives. **SED**

ONLINE SHOPPING -

While shopping online is convenient and sometimes essential, there's nothing like the personal touch of a boutique. Recently, two successful online-only boutiques, On the Go Boutique and Piper + Arrows Boutique, have added brick-and-mortar shops in Springfield.

After having an online-only presence for four years, Jocelyn Piper, owner and founder of Piper + Arrows Boutique, has officially opened a store at 627 E. Adams, next to Recycled Records. Piper said 2020 was the best year since the start of the online boutique, as people increasingly turned to online shopping during the pandemic. However, "around April of 2021 sales slowed," and she felt she needed to try something new. She believed that after everyone had been home for a year that "people wanted to be in a store, and try clothes on to make sure they like the fit before making the purchase."





TECHNOLOGY

	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE/WEBSITE/EMAIL	OWNER/MANAGER	NUMBER EMPL	NETWORK	WEB DEV.	TELE. EQUI	2. SERVICES OFFERED	YEAR Est'd
1	Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc. 2401 W. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62704	217-793-3800 Irs.com Email through website contact page	Dick Levi	339	0	0		Software development, IT staffing, technical training, infrastructure, cloud, cybersecurity, analytics. Website development: custom design, application development, content management systems, mobile apps, search engine optimization, creative services. Tech support for networks, servers and computers: network design and installation, workstation configuration, server setup. Managed IT services: remote monitoring, patch management, disaster recovery, data backup. Onsite services: computer repairs, server crash recovery, Microsoft Exchange issues.	1979
2	CDS Office Technologies 612 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-8936 cdsot.com	Mark Watson	135	0	0	0	Free network and security assessment, network planning, installation streamlining, monitoring and expansion, business continuity and disaster recovery and backup, compliance assessments (PCI, HIPAA, etc.), website design and services, system upgrades and new hardware sales/leasing and installation.	1971
3	Lead IT Corporation 1999 Wabash Ave. Suite 210 Springfield, IL 62704	217-726-7250 leaditgroup.com contact@leaditgroup.com	Ram Talluri	110	0	0		Technology services company serving the IT needs of Fortune 500, government, mid-market and emerging companies.	2010
4	MSF&W Consulting, Inc. 3445 Liberty Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-3535 msfw.com info@msfw.com	Laurie King	90		0		Maintains a full-time staff of approximately 90 IT profes- sionals with expertise in custom application development, primarily in Microsoft technologies. This includes all facets of software development: IT project management, system analysis & design, database administration, information architecture, usability and accessibility testing, training and end-user support.	1991
5	Aggieland Software, Inc. 15 S. Old State Capitol Plaza, Fl. 2 Springfield, IL 62701	224-601-5241 aggielandsoftware.com info@aggielandsoftware.com	Persis Dhankher	38		0		Specialize in mobile and web application development. Blockchain-based technology, artificial intelligence and data analytics. Software project management(agile).	2015
6	Prairie Telecom Services 148 Forrest Ave. Springfield, IL 62702	217-306-1503 prairietelecom.com jblackburn@prairietelecom.com	Jason Blackburn	30	0			Network cabling and fiber infrastructure—directional drilling for fiber/conduit placement as well as network cabling and fiber splicing.	1996
7	Agility Communications and Technology Services Company 1209 S. Fourth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-391-9290 agcomtech.com sales@agcomtech.com	Jennifer Taylor	16	0	0	0	Structured cabling and wiring services, surveillance cameras, card access systems, managed IT services, managed hosted voice services (phone), managed cloud services, managed network security, cyber security, compliance, data backup computers, servers, security cameras, card access telephone services, managed/outsourced IT services.	2008
8	AmeriCall Communications 447 B N. Walnut St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-2255 217-522-2257 americallinc.com pfelton@americallinc.com	Gene Dinardo Melanie McDaniel Joe Ushman	15	0		0	Phone systems, specializing in VOIP, Hosted solutions, Digital, and Analog solutions—Discovery and design support, facilities to mobile integration. Structured cabling and fiber optic solutions—customized structured cable plants, video surveillance, access control, block hour programs, leasing options, discover and design, project management support, wireless access points. Tele-Connect /Carrier Services—DSL, PRI, SIP trunking, fiber trunks, VPN, DS3, POTs, long distance.	2003
9	Hanson Information Systems, Inc. 2433 W. White Oaks Drive Springfield, IL 62704	217-726-2400 hansoninfosys.com info@hansoninfosys.com	Raj Mohanty president	12	0	0	0	Equipment purchase, server co-location, on- and off-site backup, Hosted Exchange email server, DNS hosting, web hosting, website design and development, dedicated internet ricruits, AT&T Partner Exchange wholesaler - Platinum Level partner, network security, financial industry and medical industry system security, penetration testing, virtual machines, antivirus and antimalware software, disaster recovery, doud computing, Hanson Cloud Drive collaboration tool, general tech support.	1997
9	King Technology, Inc. 3 N. Old State Capitol Plaza Springfield, IL 62701	217-522-6700 kingtech.net kingtech@kingtech.net	M. Kay King	12	0	0	0	Network support, custom web design and development, search engine optimization (SEO) and social media marketing, custom software development and programming geographic information systems (GIS) and custom cartography, security camera systems, cloud phone systems, point-of-sale and credit card processing.	
10	SEA Group, Inc. 3901 Pintail Drive, Suite A Springfield, IL 62711	217-523-1717 seagrp.com info@seagrp.com	Joe Marchizza	10			0	Nurse call solutions, sound masking/paging systems, IP video security solutions/door access control, structured cabling/ network backbone/copper and fiber optics and IT consulting.	1984
10	MCS 2657 W. Lawrence Ave. Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-9900 thinkMSC.com sales@thinkmcs.com	Ryan Coultas, COO	10	0	0	0	IT services for business, web application development, data center services, disaster recovery, backups, PBX systems, server management, virtualization, Nagios-based network monitoring, support agreements, technology sales, fiber connectivity, Quickbooks hosting, cloud services, Office 365, Hosted Exchange, security audits and most IT related services.	2003

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TECHNOLOGY

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	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE/WEBSITE/EMAIL	OWNER/MANAGER	EW	. 14.	••	•	SERVICES OFFERED	EST'D
11	Thirdwave Data/Comm, Inc. 500 North St., Suite 19 Springfield, IL 62704	217-544-4720 thirdwavedata.com sales@thirdwavedata.com	Brian McLean Chris Oury Jeff Reazer	8	0		0	VOIP, cloud, hybrid, digital and analog telephone system solutions. Mobile integration. Analog, TVI and IP surveillance solutions. Structured cabling and fiber optic solutions for voice, data, surveil- lance and audio/video. Panduit, Avaya, Speco, Star2Star, Salient, Nortel, Vivotek, Axis, Nextiva and Zoom.	2002
12	Novanis IT Solutions 3161 W. White Oaks Drive, Suite 100 Springfield, IL 62704	217-698-0999 novanis.com walter.meek@novanis.com	Walter Meek	7	0		0	Network infrastructure, wired and wireless networks, servicers, desktops, cybersecurity software, software, implementation services, technology and consulting services.	1982
13	MAM/COMM1 Services, Inc. 1427 S. Eighth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-522-8942 mamcomm1.com mamcomm@mamcomm1.com	Michael Milburn	6			0	Design, installation and maintenance of LAN systems, including data, voice and fiber optic cabling, CATV, security systems and telephone systems. Telecommunications equipment—Allworx, Avaya, Partner.	1993
13	GoWeb1 400 South Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62704	217-241-8554 goweb1.com theteam@goweb1.com	Mark Roberts III	6		0		Website development, domain names, hosting, SMS text marketing - TextClubs.com, mass alerts - AlertsMadeEasy.com, copywriting, search engine optimization, SSL certificates, ongoing creative services, graphic design, consulting, DIY solutions.	2008
13	Heart Technologies 1831 S. 11th St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-3100 heart.net sfeipel@heart.net	Sheila Feipel	6	0		0	Managed services, hosted services, cloud storage, wireless networks, cyber security, infrastructure, virtualization, nurse call, fire alarm, video surveillance, access control, phone systems and hosted voice.	1987
13	Clearfire, Inc. 956 Clocktower Drive, Suite 1 Springfield, IL 62704	217-953-0321 clearfirestudios.com hello@clearfirestudios.com	Casey Reid	6		0		Custom website design, web applications development, content management systems, mobile-friendly websites, technical consulting, digital marketing, search engine optimization and creative services.	2007
14	KB Computer Consulting, Inc. 510 E. Apple Orchard Road, Suite 103 Springfield, IL 62703	217-529-0108 kb-consulting.net karlb@kb-consulting.net	Karl L. Backs	5	0	0	0	A full-service computer consulting and IT company specializing in managed services, offsite backup, cloud services, network security, web services, networking, hardware/software sales, MS Office 365 and consulting, among other services.	2000
14	e-websmart 830 South Grand Ave. West Springfield, IL 62712	217-553-1073 e-websmart.com info@e-websmart.com	Michelle Tjelmeland, Owner Crista Gebhardt, manager	5		0		Website design and development, social media marketing and management services graphic design franchise marketing collateral.	1999
15	Hupp Information Technologies, Inc. 6401 Stonehaven Ridge Springfield, IL 62701	217-816-4877 huppinfotech.com dhupp@huppinfotech.com	Dean Hupp	4		0		A full service technology company offering custom programming for stand alone and web application along with their support.	2001
15	Motion VOIP 3309 Robbins Road Springfield, IL 62704	217-331-6670 motionvoip.com sales@motionvoip.com	Craig Lansing	4			0	Master Agent agreements with over 160+ technology partners offering fiber internet, cloud services, VOIP hosted voice, SIP trunks, business Wi-Fi solutions, security camera systems, hospitality technol- ogy management.	2002
15	Khamma Group, LLC 226 W. State St. Jacksonville, IL 62650	217-487-6888 khamma.com sroberts@khamma.com	Scott Roberts	4	0			Managed services: remote monitoring, helpdesk and patching. Remote access, virtual desktops. Virtual CIO services. Hosted Exchange and Office 365. Managed security: frewalls, anti-malware, DNS filter- ing, password management and vulnerability assessments. Managed hybrid cloud/local backups, disaster recovery. Network design and implementation.	2007
15	O3 Internet Consulting, Inc. 2016 S. Fourth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-528-9803 O3internet.com carol@03internet.com	Carol Kneedler	4		0		Internet marketing, including website design and development, search engine optimization, social media and email marketing. Specializing in WordPress websites that are mobile-friendly and easy to maintain. Project management, website and marketing campaign planning, content creation and maintenance, technical website support.	2007
16	Avrom Systems 4196 Spaulding Orchard Road Springfield, IL 62711	217-899-9175 avromsystems.com info@avromsystems.com	Harv Koplo	3	0	0		Remote management and monitoring services, preventative maintenance and network management. Internet security, online backup and consulting services for small businesses, municipalities and organizations.	DND
17	Cave Interactive Media 509 N. Elm St. Williamsville, IL 62693	217-496-6755 caveim.com hi@caveim.com	Denny Cave	2		0		Website design and development, custom web application development and WordPress-based solutions including e-commerce, multisite networks and performance-optimized hosting.	2003



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City surveys residents to determine internet needs

By Carey Smith

"We have a pretty big digital divide between the Black and white population," says Tom Chi, chief innovation officer for the city of Springfield. This is one of the drivers behind the city's recent internet survey.

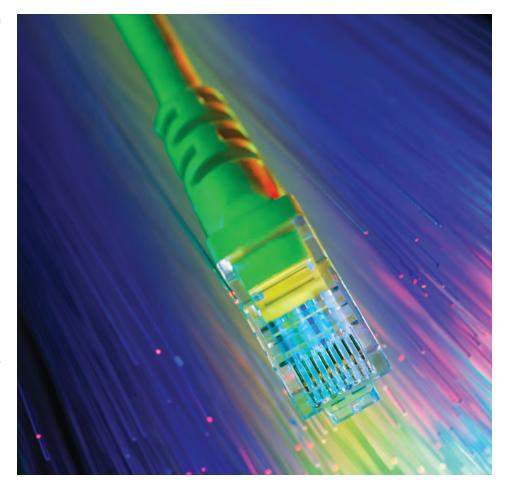
Partnering with University of Illinois Springfield, the survey gathers input from Springfield residents about the current speed, quality and reliability of their household internet, as well as the role the internet had in homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the goals is to collect data to discover, as Chi notes, "What are the root issues that cause the divide, and how to narrow and close it? The survey is the first step to see where the challenges really lie."

The pandemic brought this equity divide to the forefront. Chi reports that when the shelter-in-place order went into effect, "The city helped District 186 distribute about 1,000 hot spots for students and teachers in need who didn't have access to broadband at home."

Another goal of the survey is to determine if the minimum standard of broadband – as determined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) – is actually suitable for modern digital needs. This minimum standard is set at 25 mbps upload speed and 3 mbps download speed (25/3). As Chi explains, this may not suffice for a family working and attending school at home, especially as other uses for bandwidth, including security systems, telehealth and entertainment, have become the norm.

"We use the internet for more than just information-seeking now. We're gearing students more toward content creation, uploading videos they made for a class or using video conferencing to do classroom meetings, all the way to personal development, such as developing work skills through online schooling," says Chi, noting that the internet is used for many more things now than it was even 5 or 10 years ago. "We wanted to see how Springfield compared to the FCC broadband map."

The survey deadline was earlier this month, but it has been left open to get more responses from certain underrepresented zip codes. "We're hoping to capture as much information as possible," notes Chi. He says the city has reached out to community partners



to do field work in 62702 and 62703 to be sure everyone's voice is heard. "We want an equitable survey," adds Chi.

Other issues that limit access are that in some areas of the city, choices are limited for providers. This lack of competition can lead to higher prices and unsatisfying customer service. Affordability is a key driver in the digital divide in Springfield.

Chi says he expects the survey to show that the minimum standards set by the FCC are insufficient, given current digital demands. "I think that the broadband definition of 25/3 is outdated, and with the shelter-in-place orders, we'll see people that struggled with their internet capacity."

The data collected through this survey will provide a basis for a road map going forward, as to the city's priorities in planning to address inequities as well as planning for future broadband needs. Though the rollout of the survey coincided with federal funding released for the American Recovery Plan, Chi says that was just a coincidence, as the survey and partnership with UIS have been in the works for quite some time. "There are also a lot of grants available for infrastructure build outs, and we're looking at all available options in the future."

Some of these options include partnering with a broadband provider or looking into a municipal-owned broadband network as a public utility option, which is becoming increasingly common.

But, as Chi notes, the first step is gathering useful data for a wide variety of people's needs and uses. "We can't act without data. We work for the people, and we need to justify what we do."

Carey Smith would love for affordable fiber internet to come to the north side.



LLCC to offer Google IT Support Professional Certificate

By Karen Ackerman Witter

Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) is launching a new program in October that is perfect for someone who has lost their job, is looking for a career change or wants to learn a new skill. LLCC is part of a cohort of community colleges that is partnering with Google to offer the Google IT Support Professional Certificate. Those who earn this certificate will be qualified for entry-level jobs in IT support, such as help desk-type positions, which are in high demand. Participants must have a high school diploma or GED, but do not need to have previous IT experience.

The Google IT Support Professional Certificate Program is designed to help people build a career in technology. It came about because it was difficult for Google to find qualified people for its own jobs. However, the course is not specific to Google and covers all platforms. While no previous IT experience is required, it is ideal for those who have been toying with the idea of getting into the IT field. While considerable effort is made to link students to local job openings, this certification can also open opportunities to work remotely.

The program is instructor-led and will be taught by Jessie Maske at LLCC's Medical District location at 130 W. Mason St. in Springfield. Maske has extensive experience as an instructor and conducting computer training. She is well-suited to teach the program, having gone through the Google IT Support certification process herself. Courses will involve troubleshooting, customer service, networking, operating systems, administration and security.

Students will attend in-person classes on Mondays from Oct. 4, 2021 – Feb. 7, 2022. Students will also attend class remotely on Thursdays, which will provide additional guidance and an opportunity to ask questions. Participants will learn the necessary skills in order to be prepared to take the CompTIA A+ exam to achieve CompTIA A+ Certification. This is an industry standard for establishing a career in IT for technical support and IT operational roles.

Brenda Elliott is the director of apprenticeship programming at LLCC. She works with area businesses to help build a pipeline between LLCC students and local employers and says businesses tell her that students with technical training often lack the soft skills needed for the workplace. As a result, LLCC added a bonus course to the certification program called Career Development Soft Skills. This can be taken either during or following the certification course.

Students will also have access to participating in mock interviews, building a resume and other assistance offered by LLCC's Career Services. LLCC will work with local businesses to connect students with open help desk positions. Elliott encourages local businesses to refer employees who may benefit from this opportunity.

"We are excited to offer this timely career training opportunity to residents of the LLCC district," says Elliott. "A job in IT can mean in-person or remote help desk work, either in a small business or at a global company. Whether you've been tinkering with IT or are completely new to the field, this program may be your ticket to a new career."

LLCC will accept 10-12 students for the first cohort of students starting in October. The cost of the program is \$2,995 and includes an instructor-led program, exam readiness, all course materials, exam vouchers, the bonus course in career development soft skills and access to LLCC's Career Services. For more details and registration information, visit www.llcc.edu/medical-district or contact Brenda Elliot at 217-786-2326.

Karen Ackerman Witter is a frequent contributor to Springfield Business Journal.

Companies adapt to a remote workforce

By Holly Whisler

Only one year ago, unless your job was deemed essential, you were working from home and doing the best you could with the technology you had on hand. On the flip side, employers were doing their best to support their remote workforces, often scrambling to put additional technology in place to allow staff to better communicate with management and each other.

Now that 47% of Illinois' population is vaccinated against COVID-19, many companies are prepared to repopulate their offices. However, the world of work has been radically transformed by the pandemic – office space has been redesigned for safety and the workforce has been reimagined. As a recent *Forbes* headline announced, "Hybrid is the future," and companies need to have the technology necessary to support the digital workforce as they communicate with customers, collaborate with colleagues and securely access company information.

Companies want to be prepared and have been shopping for technologies that best support their dispersed workforce. Gene Dinardo, president of AmeriCall, 447 N. Walnut St., said people want the ability to leave the office and not miss a call. As long as there is internet access and unified communications (UC), this is possible. UC is a business concept that integrates a multitude of communication services such as instant messaging, presence information, talk, text, data sharing and a host of other features.

Dinardo explained the versatility of unified communications: "Basically, you can have a phone in the office, an app on your cellphone and an app on the computer or laptop, and when you receive a call, all devices ring." He said you can receive calls on your cellphone or you can "unplug the office phone and take it with you. It's as if you have the office with you, as long as you have access to the internet."

Jacob Dinardo, technician and IT specialist with AmeriCall, said, "People want the flexibility to move between the office and home, and the cloud makes this possible." With advancements in cloud-based solutions, UC also makes it possible for people to share files during a video call, explain their files and see their colleagues, just as if they were all in the same location.

"Although COVID has changed the landscape as to how people work, the web-based solutions have become more reliable. With so many added features, it's no longer a phone – it's a collaboration tool," said Nicki Baptist, senior



project manager with AmeriCall. She said another added benefit for companies is that internet pricing is becoming more affordable. Cloud-based solutions could eventually replace landline phones in offices across America.

Sheila Feipel, Springfield branch manager for Heart Technologies, 1831 S. 11th St., said, "Unified communications has streamlined business and helped employees be more effective, and it can even save on monthly phone bills. When you can get all of this technology and save money, it's a win-win."

She noted that UC can allow a person to send and receive calls, texts and even conduct video conferencing from anywhere in the world. When a call is placed, the office number appears, not the cell number. "We learned from the last year that people can work effectively from home," Feipel said.

In addition to staying connected, it's important for employees to be able to securely access company information. "When a company decides to enable remote access of data, they need to also consider security. The need for cybersecurity is ever increasing," said Joshua Ditto, chief information officer for CDS Office Technologies, 612 S. Dirksen Parkway. "Businesses of all sizes are becoming more aware about cybersecurity and they should be concerned – you don't have to have a target on your roof to be at risk." Ditto recommends companies request a cybersecurity consultation from the telecommunications provider to make certain they are protected from skillful hackers.

Feipel concurred, "Being able to access the company's database without having to be in the office is convenient and boosts productivity." However, having the necessary cybersecurity protection is essential.

"Years ago, in the IT world we would say, 'If you get hacked,' and now we say, 'When you get hacked," Feipel noted. She recommends that all employees be educated about cybersecurity. "It is usually human failure that is the chink in the armor; when one person clicks on an attachment, that may be all that is needed to lock a company into a ransomware situation."

Now that there is more time to plan and prepare, companies would be wise to invest in technology to support a remote or hybrid workforce. **SE**



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	NAME/ADDRESS	PHONE/WEBSITE/EMAIL	OWNER/MANAGER	NUMBER EMPLO	vees VIDE	,0 FIRE	SECUR	M ACCESS	CONTRO	ESS REM	SE SERVICES OFFERED	YEAR Est'd
1	CDS Office Technologies 612 S. Dirksen Parkway Springfield, IL 62703	800-367-1508 cdsot.com jditto@cdsot.com	Jay Watson Mark Watson	130	0			0	0	0	Security cameras, thermal scanning solutions, wire- less networking and remote access solutions.	1971
2	Senergy Technologies 509 N. Elm St. Williamsville, IL 62693	217-566-2826 senergy-electric.com	Matthew J. Giacomini, president Brandon M. Keafer, PE, vice president	52	0		0	0	0		Design-build and design-assist security and technology solutions including CCTV, access control, intrusion detection, fire, paging, intercom, audio/ visual and IT infrastructure. Offer managed services on all solutions.	2014
3	George Alarm 917 S. Ninth St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-525-1334 georgealarm.com sales@georgealarm.com	Doug George	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	Burglar, fire and video systems, door access control, fire testing and sensitivity testing, patient monitoring systems and phone apps systems. NICET certified staff, UL-certified central station. U.S. manufactured products.	1957
4	Young's Security Systems, Inc. 440 N. First St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-744-9000 youngs-security.com jhavey@youngs-security.com	Jim Havey Bill Havey	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	Local UL-listed central station monitoring over cellular, internet and phone. Professional design and installation of state-of-the-art commercial and residential fire, security, IP camera, door access control, entry door security and medical alert systems. Wired, wireless and hybrid systems. All systems are phone app compatible.	1985
5	A-1 Corporate Hardware 101 N. Fourth St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-744-7575 a-1lock.com info@a-1lock.com	Joseph White	23	0			0	0	0	Locksmith services and door hanging hardware for residential, commercial and government agencies. IP surveillance for commercial and government agen- cies. Radio-dispatched technicians available 24/7.	1945
5	Central Illinois Security A Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc. Company 2451 W. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62704	217-787-4970 centralillinoissecurity.com swilson@centralillinoissecurity.com	Dick Levi, president and CEO Sharon Wilson, general manager	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	Global information technology solutions including the design and installation of security systems, fire alarms, video surveillance, smart home automation, access control systems and video conferencing technologies for both residential and commercial applications. State-of-the-art, UL-approved central monitoring facility provides alarm monitoring throughout the central Illinois area.	1979
6	AmeriCall Communications 477 B N. Walnut St. Springfield, IL 62702	217-522-2255 americallinc.com pfelton@ americallinc.com	Gene Dinardo Melanie McDaniel Joe Ushman	15	0	0	0	0	0		Commercial security services including security cameras for parking lots and building exteriors, interior offices. Customized secure access controls and monitoring for every type of facility including retrofit- ting security platforms into existing environments.	2003
7	SEA Group, Inc. 3901 Pintail Drive, Suite A Springfield, IL 62711	217-523-1717 Seagrp.com info@seagrp.com	Joe Marchizza	10	0		0	0	0		IP video security solutions, including license plate recognition, sound masking/paging systems, nurse call solutions, door access control, low voltage infrastructure and IT consulting.	1984
8	Heart Technologies 1831 S. 11th St. Springfield, IL 62703	217-544-3100 heart.net sfeipel@heart.net	Sheila Feipel	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	Fire and intrusion security, design, installation and testing, NICET certified, door access control and video cameras, paging, intercom and voice evacuation.	1987
9	Lloyd IT Services, LLC 505 St. John Drive Sherman, IL 62684	217-496-6722 lloyditservices.com klloyd@lloyditservices.com	Kevin Lloyd	1	0					0	Locally owned IT services company providing 24/7/365 support to commercial, government and residential clients. Services include security camera systems, server/computer sales and repair, network cabling, network security, Wi-Fi, VoIP, managed services and more.	2015



Cybersecurity consideration in a remote work environment

By Michael Kokal

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses found as many as 56% of their employees using personal computers for remote work. Hackers almost immediately realized that this disbursed workforce created new opportunities for cyberattacks. According to a recent survey by VMWare, 91% of businesses have reported seeing an increase in cyberattacks since their employees started working from home.

Hackers have been able to exploit new vulnerabilities in businesses because of remote computing. As more home computers are connected to a company's virtual private network (VPN) and devices, more backdoors are created for hackers to exploit a company's server.

Additionally, employees tend to be more comfortable and lax in a home environment and therefore, more vulnerable to social engineering attacks. Working at home may lead to greater comfort in reading an apparently funny email supposedly sent from a friend during work hours when employees are not more on their toes in a structured work environment.

Emphasize training of employees

The easiest, cheapest and most cost-effective way to address cybersecurity attacks is to train your employees. In the past, employees may have had access to IT personnel in the same office building, but in the remote work environment, home-based employees might not have immediately access to IT expertise. However, there are many good software and online training programs available. Additionally, advise your employees on identifying a potential phishing attack.

Be skeptical of emails

First, almost any email from an outside provider such as an email from your bank, Amazon, eBay or any internet site should be viewed with suspicion, and the presumption should be that the email is not legitimate. Indeed, if you receive an email from eBay or Amazon about your order, the easiest way to verify is not to click on the link in the email, but to actually go to your account on the company's website or your bank's website to see if there really is an issue. Taking that extra step will prevent you and your organization from a potential cyberattack.

Identify domain names

Another quick tip to identify whether the incoming email is legitimate or fake is to determine the domain name of the incoming email. The domain name is the information that comes directly after the @ sign in an email. For example, in the email address support@amazon.com, the domain name to the right of the @ sign would be amazon.com. A legitimate email domain will match the URL for the organization's website. For example, in the context of banking, here are examples of email domains:

Possible safe email: @USBank.com

Likely unsafe email: @BankerUSBank.com

At a quick glance, the unsafe email appears like a reasonable and safe domain. But if the domain is anything different than what you would type in a web browser to access the organization's website, it is most likely a fake email address.

Identify fake websites

Another important tactic is to identify fake websites that might be the source of the cybersecurity attack. Employees can be trained to pay attention to the address bar in the web browser. Your connection is likely secure if you look to the far left of your address bar (if you are using Chrome or Firefox) and you see a padlock icon, indicating that your connection is safe. Chrome or Firefox are recommended browsers over Internet Explorer for this and other features.

Another way to determine a fake email site is to look at the URL. The main parts of the URL, which are the letters before the .com or .org, should not be a mixture of letters and numbers that are not familiar. The domain organization of the main site and emails you receive from the organization should match. For example, a potentially safe URL would be the following:

Possibly safe: amazon.com/creditcardoffer

Likely unsafe: amazoncom.ru/creditcardoffer

Again, the safest precaution you can take is simply not clicking links in any email but to verify the email either with a phone call or proceeding to your main account via the company's website.

Protect critical infrastructures with cloud-based servers

Rather than keeping files on proprietary hard drives or local storage devices within the organization, cloud-based storage makes it possible to save and protect this information remotely. Data stored with cloud service providers have superior security measures and their employees are security experts. Using cloud-based security also provides a number of additional options for security, including two-factor authorization, the use of VPNs, security tokens, data encryption and firewall services, among others.

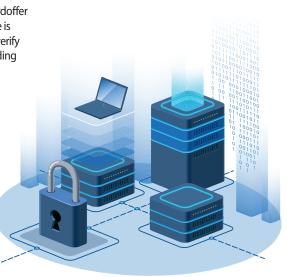
Limit access

Organizations should also limit who can authorize payments, which would greatly reduce the number of potential vulnerabilities. If a company does not give a single employee access rights to be able to do everything across all accounts, it would greatly limit the damage any one person can do in the event that their computer has been compromised.

Get cybersecurity insurance

In this day and age, a cyberattack can almost be considered inevitable. A ransomware attack, for example, can easily cost a business a substantial amount of revenue, not to mention downtime. Cybersecurity insurance can assist a company in paying the ransom, performing recovery and perhaps even initiate any litigation that arises from an attack.

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





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Electronic signatures are here to stay

By Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.

COVID has changed many, many things – including how people sign legally binding documents. Although electronic signatures were gaining in popularity prior to COVID, the pandemic forced most people to confront the issue and ask: Is it acceptable to use electronic signatures to create legally binding documents? And what exactly is considered an electronic signature?

The short answer is yes, electronic signatures are now accepted on most documents and contracts as being legally binding. An electronic signature can take a variety of forms. It could be as simple as a typed name (e.g. /s/ Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.), a digital image of a signature that has been handwritten (i.e., a traditional scan or Docusign), or even just a symbol. The key is whether it captures the intent of a person to be legally bound.

What's the legal basis for this? Electronic signatures have been recognized since 2000, when the Federal ESign Act was signed into law. Most states then followed suit and adopted their own polices. In Illinois, the general rule is that electronic signatures are recognized just like written signatures so long as the electronic signature takes on the characteristics of an ordinary signature – meaning it is not easily forged and becomes invalid if the document is altered in any way.

Illinois law provides that parties may establish their own requirements for what constitutes an electronic signature. Therefore, although not technically necessary, it's a good idea to include provisions in a contract that the parties agree that facsimile or scanned signatures are intended to be legally binding. I generally use language similar to this:

"In the event that any signature is delivered by facsimile transmission or by email delivery of a "pdf" format data file, such signature shall create a valid and binding obligation of the party executing (or on whose behalf such signature is executed) with the same force and effect as if such facsimile or ".pdf" signature page were an original thereof."

As with everything, there are a few exceptions to this rule. Certain documents cannot be signed with an electronic signature. These documents include wills, trusts and documents by which title to property is transferred, such as deeds, car titles and bills of sale. Negotiable instruments, such as promissory notes, are a separate category with specific rules – suffice to say that I don't see electronic signatures becoming commonplace in this regard.

Electronic signatures are becoming so common that federal and state courts now allow for electronic filing of court documents. When a document is submitted to the court through electronic filing, the documents are signed with an electronic signature. This is a perfect example of how technology is changing the way things work.

Even some state agencies have adopted the use of electronic signatures on their documents. For example, when forming an LLC or corporation online in Illinois, all the documents are executed and submitted with electronic signatures.

The Internal Revenue Service works with electronic signatures as well. When you submit your taxes online through e-filing, you are using a form of electronic signature to verify you are in fact the person who submitted the tax forms. This is done through an electronic PIN number.

In an effort to make electronic signatures more secure, there is another layer to the electronic signature called a digital signature. They may sound similar, but in fact they are separate things. Again, an electronic signature shows the intent of a person in an electronic transaction. The digital signature doesn't capture that intent, but offers additional indication of genuineness. A digital signature alone would not be legally binding.

A digital signature is an encryption procedure that secures the data and helps verify the authenticity of the signature. It allows one to trust that a signature is valid through the use of a public and private key pair. All parties know the public key, but only the signer knows the private key. This makes the signature unique to each individual – essentially, a digital fingerprint. Because the digital signature is unique, it cannot be copied, tampered with or altered. The authenticity of an electronic signature, backed with a digital signature, is far less likely to be questioned. Adobe and MS Word offer versions of digital signatures.

Because of rules put forth by the state regarding the law establishing the permissibility of electronic signatures, there may be a requirement that such signatures be created using a "secured procedure." The rules are a bit short on specifics, so savvy parties would be well advised to include some sort of digital signature on top of the electronic signature.

On a related topic, Governor JB Pritzker enacted an executive order that relaxes notary requirements until the COVID disaster proclamation expires. These new rules allow for remote notarization as long as certain requirements are followed. It will be interesting to see if these new rules will be enacted into law such that they will apply post-pandemic. Currently, there is a bill providing for exactly that, but it's stuck in committee at the General Assembly.

As we advance into a more technologically savvy world post-COVID, expect electronic signatures to become much more common, but also expect complications as the law struggles to catch up with that technology. [S1]

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

Send your legal questions to tpavlik@delanolaw.com for possible inclusion in a future column.



Springfield Business Journal • August 2021 • Page 27



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MEDICAL NEWS

Pritzker signs bill expanding covered Medicaid services



Gov. JB Pritzker signs a bill into law expanding coverage under the state's Medicaid plan for mental health, substance abuse treatment and a number of other services. PHOTO COURTESY OF BLUEROOMSTREAM.COM

By Peter Hancock, Capitol News Illinois

Illinois residents who have health coverage through Medicaid now have access to a broad range of services including mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, smoking cessation and dental services.

On July 6, Gov. JB Pritzker signed Senate Bill 2294, which passed unanimously out of both chambers during the spring legislative session.

"This legislation that I'm signing into law today is a product of our passionately dedicated, bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators who are part of the Medicaid legislative working group," Pritzker said at a bill signing ceremony in suburban Chicago. "... For all the naysayers that always seem to bad-talk the state of Illinois, few other states can say that they have an annual commitment shared across both sides of the aisle to hash out how to make health care access for millions of Illinoisans who rely on Medicaid even better."

Among many provisions, the bill provides

that people covered under Medicaid will continue to be eligible throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency and for up to 12 months after the emergency expires.

It also calls on the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to establish a program for implementation of certified community behavioral health clinics by Jan. 1, 2022, and to develop a "comprehensive behavioral health strategy" that is to be submitted to the governor and General Assembly by July 1, 2022.

Other provisions include recognizing veteran support specialists as mental health professionals under the state's Medicaid plan; coverage of both individual and group tobacco cessation programs; requiring in-patient treatment for anyone experiencing an opioid overdose or withdrawal if it's determined to be medically necessary; coverage of kidney transplant medications regardless of a patient's U.S. residency status; and providing a 10% increase, through March 31, 2022, in reimbursement rates for supportive living facilities, to be paid for with federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act.

House Majority Leader Greg Harris, a Chicago Democrat and member of the Medicaid working group, said this year's bill is aimed at addressing many of the health care disparities that have existed in Illinois for years but which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's something we in the legislature do every year to improve health care for people in every corner of the state of Illinois, but this will be really the first post-COVID omnibus bill," he said. "And in this, we've learned a lot of lessons from the last year about inequities and disparities and communities hardest hit by COVID. Many of these are covered by Illinois Medicaid. Some of these folks were not covered at all. So today is a step one of many steps to expand coverage and access to make it more user friendly and reduce disparities for people to get health care."



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Heart Technologies has a heart for supporting nonprofits

By Janet Seitz

Sheila Feipel received the Athena Award from Illinois Women in Leadership in 2016, honoring her for professional excellence, community service and for actively assisting other women in their attainment of professional excellence and leadership skills. "All my life, I have been dedicated to giving back to the communities in which I live, especially to women, minorities and nonprofit organizations," said Feipel. She has participated in projects or served on the board for the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center, Habitat for Humanity - Sangamon County, Catholic Charities, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Illinois, Rotary Midtown Springfield, Local First Springfield, Illinois Women In Leadership and Black Lives Matter SPI.

Feipel first got involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters in 2005. She volunteered for a little brother because wait lists were longer for boys. A secondgrader, Dylan, "was very happy to finally have a 'big," she said. "But I was a girl, after all, so he was a little disappointed, too. I have always been athletic and still play sports today. When we went out to recess on that first day, I threw a beautiful, long spiral football pass. His friends cheered, 'Your big sister rocks!'We got along like true buds from then on."

A little girl in Dylan's class asked how to get a big sister and was put on a long waiting list. "Then, one day, with eyes wide open and eager, she asked me to be her big sister," recalled Feipel. "I immediately said yes. I would visit one of them one day and the other the next."

Reinforcing the value of education was important, but so was interaction and activities. Studies, playing, art projects, shared meals and shopping trips all came into play. "Dylan eventually moved away," said Feipel. "Yet, Sade and I are still together today as she heads off to college in Florida in the fall."

"Fortunately, I work at a company that shares my passions for helping others and giving back," Feipel continued. "Heart Technologies funds all my group memberships and financially supports all the groups to which I belong, as well as allowing me to spend my work hours in their service."

Through Heart Technologies' Great Heart Give program, the company annually donates a technology upgrade worth \$5,000-\$10,000 to a nonprofit organization. In the Sangamon County area, Girl Scouts of Central Illinois, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Illinois and Helping Hands of Springfield have benefited. Heart also sponsors and volunteers for the annual Easterseals telethon



Ronetta Buckner, shelter director for Helping Hands of Springfield, with Sheila Feipel, Springfield branch manager for Heart Technologies. PHOTO BY DEMETRIUS HUDSON

annually.

Feipel finds it rewarding to help businesses. "Throughout the shelter-in-place order during the height of the pandemic, we helped our clients work from home and keep their businesses up and running seamlessly. It is even more rewarding when you can provide those same cutting-edge solutions for the nonprofit organizations in our community to help them meet their goals of improving the lives of all our citizens."

Annie Lantgen, director of administration for Helping Hands of Springfield, said her organization had been operating with a nearly obsolete phone system and searching for a new service prior to the pandemic. Voicemail and office moves impeded recovering messages, and calls couldn't be forwarded, presenting issues for case managers and more. The process and expense involved in switching services was daunting until Feipel and Heart made recommendations.

Feipel suggested the nonprofit apply for help, and Helping Hands was surprised to be able to receive a grant for a technology upgrade.

"With the assistance from Heart Technologies, both financially and their amazing service, we have been able to completely revamp our phone system and make life easier for all of us," said Lantgen. "Looking back, I am not even sure how we operated prior to the upgrade. We certainly wouldn't have been able to operate properly over the past year, while many of our team has been working remotely."

Feipel added, "One thing I can guarantee you is that the vast majority of, if not all, nonprofits fall short of meeting their IT necessities. Most make do with old, outdated equipment and solutions. And that is where the Great Heart Give can really have an impact on the way they do business." Feipel noted that she recently helped convert a nonprofit from a 25-year-old phone system that didn't even have voicemail to a unified cloud communications system.

"The greatest challenge in working with nonprofits is that there is just so much need and not enough hours in a day. The greatest reward is seeing them fulfill their missions with all the tools available to companies of profit."

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

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Sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace

Creating safety for LGBTQ+ employees is your leadership duty

By Kristina Barbee

In recent years, the LGBTQ+ community has experienced a lot of progress in social acceptance and in gaining more legal rights and protections, but it can be still dangerous and deadly to come out publicly, specifically for transgender and nonbinary individuals.

In 2020, even with the isolation and quarantine we all experienced, there were 37 violent deaths in the transgender and nonbinary community, a record high since the Human Rights Campaign first started keeping track. Knowing this danger could become their reality, it should be no surprise that some of our LGBTQ+ colleagues choose not to disclose their orientations or identities when they step into the office.

In an international Harvard Business Review study, 46% of U.S. workers surveyed stated that they have chosen to not come out at work. While it is known that people who are able to come out at work and live authentically are happier and experience less social stress and depression, many cited in this HBR study and others indicated that they felt discomfort or fear with coming out.

As leaders, there are numerous ways we can attempt to ease stress and create a more LGBTQ+ friendly workplace that increases safety for our team members.

From the beginning of a person's career with you, work with your HR department to have all employees provide their pronouns that they would like used on paperwork and publicly in a legal and confidential fashion. Asking this of all employees normalizes asking for and confirming pronouns and greatly reduces the risk of unintentionally outing an employee or misgendering one.

Additionally, work to provide HR processes that do not force transgender employees to come out. In some instances, background checks could unintentionally disclose to the HR department that your newest female-identifying employee is a transgender female who does not publicly share that information.

Avoiding gendered language and assumptions about the gender of an employee's partner can help employees feel more comfortable disclosing their personal lives when they know that their lives are not in direct contradiction to your assumptions. For example, instead of asking a married female employee what her husband's name is, you could instead ask "What is your partner's name?" and use nongendered pronouns, such as they/them, when asking additional questions.

Lastly, make LGBTQ+ inclusion visible in your company. Show your support by adding an LGBTQ+ charity to your annual giving program, display inclusive symbols such as Pride flags year-round, work with HR and your Diversity, Equity, Inclusion team to create

more inclusive policies and procedures and ensure you and your employees are being educated and informed.

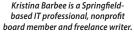
As a straight cisgender woman, I have never felt any fear discussing gender or sexual orientation at work. Water cooler talks about the weekend never involved having to navigate gendered language when discussing a date I went on with my partner, and I've never had to wonder if decorating my desk with photos of my spouse could be deadly, dangerous or cause work relationships to falter.

That is a privilege and a comfort some of our colleagues may never feel.

Regardless of whether you personally support the LGBTQ+ community, as a leader it is your duty to respect and support your employees' rights to live life as their authentic selves.

It is not a choice to be gay, transgender or nonbinary, but it is a choice to be a leader who supports all their employees and provide a safe environment for every single one, regardless of their age, gender identify, race or sexual orientation. ^{SBJ}







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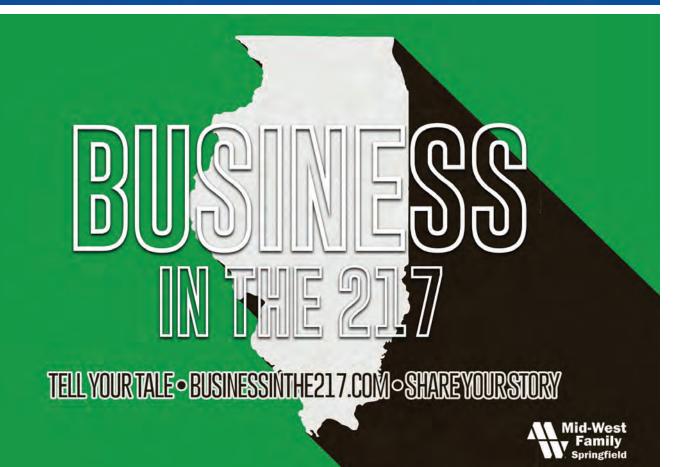
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Springfield Business Journal • August 2021 • Page 33

Calendar

AUGUST 2021

Capital City Toastmasters

Wednesdays, 12pm. Temporarily meeting via Zoom. Email or call for information. admin-1313356@ toastmastersclubs.org. 217-698-8767.

McBrian Lincoln-Douglas Toastmasters Club

Thursdays, 6pm. The club is dedicated to the development of communication and leadership skills. Red School Mall, 1275 Wabash Ave. 217-546-8624.

Men's City Tournament

Sun., Aug. 1. Lincoln Greens Golf Course, 217-786-4111 and Panther Creek Country Club, 3001 Panther Creek Drive, 217-546-4432.

The Chamber Job Fair

Tue., Aug. 3, 4-6pm. Hosted by the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Businesses and organizations will be offering a wide-array of positions and desired levels of experience. More information and a list of participating businesses can be found on the Chamber's website at gscc.org. Crowne Plaza Springfield Convention Center, 3000 S. Dirksen Parkway. 217-525-1173.

The Association of Women in Communications

Mon., Aug. 9, 5:30-7:30pm. Social event in lieu of meeting. Long Bridge Golf Course, 1055 W. Camp Sangamo Road. awcspringfield.org.

Ribbon Cutting

Tue., Aug. 10, 11 a.m. With the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. IC BBQ, 2415 N. Dirksen Parkway. 217-679-6633. icbbqspringfield.com.

The Network Group

Tue., Aug. 10, 11:45am. Sangamo Club, 227 E. Adams St. 217-652-3686.

Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois (WE-CI)

Wed., Aug. 11, 11am-12:30pm. Julie Walschleger Timm will present Fierce Conversations. Guests are free. Members are \$16 at preregistration or \$23 at the door. Register by Aug. 9. Village Tea Room, 3301 Robbins Road. 217-441-2342.

Two-Person Triad

Sat., Aug. 14. Piper Glen Golf Club, 7112 Piper Glen Drive. 217-483-6537.



Good Morning, Springfield

Tue., Aug. 17, 7:30 a.m. Good Morning Springfield provides a casual atmosphere conducive to making connections that matter. Check out this month's event and network with other Chamber members. \$5 Chamber members and \$15 mon-members. Illinois Educators Credit Union, 3101 Montvale Drive. 217-528-2642.

Small Business Awards

Tue., Aug. 24, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce's 36th Annual Small Business Awards recognizes area small business people for their outstanding achievement in four different business categories. Presented by Hickory Point Bank. Members \$35 or \$45 after Aug. 6. Non-members \$65. Crowne Plaza, 3000 S. Dirksen Parkway. 217-525-1173.

Ribbon Cutting

Thu., Aug. 26, 4 p.m. With the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Agility Communications and Technology Services Company, 1209 S. Fourth St. 217-391-9290. agcomtech.com.

Visit springfieldbusinessjournal.com to add your event to the monthly calendar.

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Protessional Women's Calendar of Events You play a key role and we thank you for your contributions to our community.

Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL)

IWIL will hold a lunch meeting on Thursday, Aug. 19 from 12-1 p.m. at Illini Country Club. Dr. Vidhya Prakash and Dr. Vidya Sundareshan with SIU School of Medicine will speak on "The Co-Vids Reprise: Leadership Lessons Learned from the Covid-19 Pandemic."

Luncheons are open to all IWIL members and their guests. Registration is \$22 for members and guests through Aug.13 or \$27 on or after Aug. 14. Registration will close Aug. 18.

IWIL exists to promote professionalism and to develop members' leadership and management abilities. This is done through education, mentoring, networking, member participation, encouragement as well as support, friendship and community involvement.



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



Ocean Crab House

By Thomas C. Pavlik Jr.



Judging from how many Cajun-inspired seafood boil restaurants have popped up recently, you'd be safe in thinking that this genre has the current hot hand. With the opening of Ocean Crab House in the former Show Me's space on MacArthur not too far from my house, I decided it was time to try this genre out. I was glad I did.

Ocean Crab House did a nice job revamping the place – it was getting a little long in the tooth in its former life. My guest and I both commented that the space was very clean. Pretty much everything has been redone, from floor to ceiling. There's a nice nautical motif, including an actual sailboat outside. Due to the paucity of windows, it can be a little dark, but I think that actually adds to the ambience.

We arrived just after 11 a.m. and were the first diners to appear. We dallied a little after our meal, and noted that a steady stream of customers kept coming in. We also noticed that Ocean Crab was doing quite a bit of takeout, especially with thirdparty delivery services.

Ocean Crab's focus is on seafood boils. Diners select their desired protein, sauce and level of spice. Sauces include dry (Old Bay seasoning only), garlic butter, lemon pepper, original Cajun or the Ocean Special (a mix of all sauces). Spices levels vary from none to fire. Each seafood boil dish comes served in a large plastic bag that can be opened to spread the goodies over a platter. All diners are provided with



bibs and plastic gloves, and each table has a pail in which shells and heads can be placed. Available items include crawfish, crab, lobster,

shrimp (head on or off), clams and mussels. All items come with corn and potatoes that have both been cooked in the same boil. Diners selecting combo meals also get some andouille sausage thrown in. Serving sizes are either a half pound or a full pound and range in price from \$8 to \$28, depending on size and type.

The remainder of Ocean Crab's menu also skews heavily to Cajun-style and includes po-boys, gumbo (chicken, shrimp and sausage) and fried baskets served with either Cajun, sweet or regular fries.

We decided to focus on Ocean Crab's seafood boil. I opted for a half-pound of clams served spicy and with the Ocean Special on the side (\$8). My guest went with a pound of shrimp (head off, \$17), also spicy and with

(Left) A clam and shrimp seafood boil. Fried calamari. PHOTOS BY STACIE LEWIS

Ocean Special. We also decided to throw a half pound of the sausage into the shrimp dish.

It didn't take long for our food to come out. The presentation was spot on and designed to make it easy. We didn't use the gloves, but imagine that many people would appreciate the option. The bibs came in handy and were well-sized. What we didn't appreciate were the plastic forks – we both felt that traditional cutlery would have been more in order.

My clams were cooked perfectly – nice and tender. The sauce came in a separate container, and I appreciated being able to control the amount of sauce for each bite. It had good flavor, but was definitely short on spice (more on that later) and heavy on the salt. The corn and potatoes took on the flavor of the boil seasoning and were welcome additions to the mix. I shared in the sausage order and found it to be juicy and flavorful. I also appreciated its hit of fat, which paired nicely with the lean clams.

My guest was pleased with his shrimp, commenting that he was thankful they weren't overcooked and rubbery. He, likewise, found the sauce to be lacking in spice. I was able to snag a few of his shrimp, and found them very easy to peel – especially because the shell had been split as part of the deveining process. I also agreed with his conclusion on their tenderness. I'd happily order either again.

We decided we weren't ready to leave yet and called for a second order. This time, we went with a half-pound of crawfish (\$8) with another half-pound of sausage added on (\$5). We also decided to kick things up a notch and asked for the spiciest sauce they had.

The crawfish was delicious and was also cooked to perfection. Whatever they were boiled in had tons of flavor – well done, Ocean Crab. Unfortunately, the fire sauce lacked a punch. We both concluded that it would be well-served by having a shaker of cayenne at each table.

All in all, we enjoyed our lunch and each concluded that we'd come back again. 59

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New businesses

Sangamon County New Business Registrations, May 16 – June 15, 2021

Anders Lawn Services, 3420 Moorgate Drive. 553-8718. Jamie Anders. Cleaning Fairy, 1087 N. State St. 220-7523. LaShaunda S. Smith. Heart in Hand Massage Therapy, 528 E. Capitol Ave. 503-3419. Kayla Rowland. Very Special Collection by Bellaa, 58 Carolyn Court. 685-3017. Shavonna Bates. Good Times, 816 E. Cook St. 553-9187. Jonathan Hyon. Mr Machine, 215 S. Durkin Drive, Apt. 1. 210-1059. Allen McIntosh. True Life Brand, 10 Candlewood Drive, Apt. 1. 741-5094. Stephanie Collins. White House Properties, 3201 S. Douglas Ave., Lot 1. 210-413-2185. Yvette D. White, Lance E. Hughes. Lovely Reflection, 2945 Stanton St., Suite C. 904-0288. Nashaya Wilson. Margo Relford Deliveries, 1029 S. Third St. 993-1106. Margo Relford. Mr. N Mrs. Sudds, 1909 Waterford Drive. 802-558-9234. Van Lee Converse, Jennifer Converse. **GS Services**, 2117 S. Glenwood Ave. 741-9999. Gary A. Self. Brown and Son, 1728 E. Jackson St., Apt. A. 404-698-5987. Tremayne Brown. Karmen Beathea Gifts of Love, 2019 Boyd Court. 993-1533. Karmen Beathea. Long Nine Media, LLC, 1605 S. Lowell Ave. 800-2826. Dana L Saal, Richard F. Saal. Southern Elegance Event Design & Décor, 1656 W. Jerome Ave. 573-864-3184. Dominique L O'Connor. Dust Buddies, 2746 S. Lowell Ave. 717-7845. Kimberly Renee Tansky, Chassidy Marie Tabor. Pao Partners, LLC dba Pao Bistro, 2824 Plaza Drive. 546-4660. Jeff Griswold, Patrick Timothy Timoney. Aub's Paws, 25 Powell Street, B, Riverton. 481-4730. Aubrey Lee Walker.

Parkway Pointe shopping center getting three new tenants

A new gourmet hot dog restaurant is slated to open across the street from Portillo's. While Lucky Dog's, 2975 Lindbergh Blvd., will be a fraction of the size of the 7,800-square-foot Portillo's that opened last December, it will offer liquor and video gaming in addition to a buildyour-own hot dog menu.

Owner Gene Rowell operates under the business name Kickn 66 Liquor & More and has a gaming parlor in Litchfield with the same name. Lucky Dog Slots opened last month in Westville and additional locations are planned for Mattoon and River Grove.

In the same shopping center, the former Creve Coeur Camera space is being renovated to accommodate two new tenants. The camera shop, located at 2955 Lindbergh Blvd., closed in April 2019.

Shawn Miller is a U.S. Air Force veteran who opened his own Allstate Insurance Agency in February 2020 and is hoping to relocate to the Lindbergh strip center by July. "It's a business move, where we're located now, we're sitting in a back corner behind Bella Milano with no traffic or visibility," he said. "We wanted to have more of a visible storefront, and there are no other insurance agents in that area."

The remaining portion of the space is slated to become an ice cream shop. According to building permits on file with the City of Springfield, Thai and Hang Phuong will be the business owners.



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DailyDrawings, LLC, 1521 W. Capitol Ave. 622-8338. Julie Dailey, Michael Bracey.
Ladybug's Accessories, 218 W. Scarritt St. 832-974-7529. Marcia E. Taylor.
SavieBizzy Bee's, 215 E. Scarritt St. 309-648-6588. Saveon Green.
Building Life Baker, 25 Lambert Lane. 502-2437. Sabrina Von Lanken.
Massage by Dechele, 2945 Stanton St., Suite D. 339-4557. Dechele J. Trammell.
Heisejason-pbg GitHub, 2214 Lincolnshire Blvd. 416-8800. Jason Scott Heise.
Example, 2214 Lincolnshire Blvd. 416-8800. Jason Scott Heise.
Brown's Commercial Cleaning Service, 14 Coachlight Court. 670-7124. Gail Brown Bates, Kenneth Brown.
Loyalties, 2130 S. 16th St. 717-0817. Zavonda Murray.
Room Rari Productions, 2341 Gillespie St., Apt. 2. 816-2007. Jafarie S. Lampkin.
Wild Wellness, 7032 Kingsmill Court. 242-2659. Sierra Voss.

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