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Helping Hands plans more permanent supportive housing

Park Street Apartments project was controversial even before proposed use revealed

DEVELOPMENT | Dean Olsen

About 80 homeowners who tried unsuccessfully to block a Springfield zoning change in 2021 for a proposed 24-unit apartment complex only now are learning the tenants would be people who used to be homeless and need what’s known as permanent supportive housing.

Gail Van Den Bossche, who lives around the corner from the proposed Park Street Apartments site at 3526 S. Park Ave, on the city’s west side, said she was surprised Windsor Homes owner and president Mike Niehaus changed his original plans for constructing market-rate, privately owned apartments.

Since Niehaus received Springfield City Council approval for the zoning change in September, plans for the complex have changed so that Niehaus’ Windsor Homes company would be the general contractor and Helping Hands of Springfield would be the owner.

The arrangement was outlined in a financing plan announced Jan. 26 by the Illinois Housing Development Authority, a quasi-state agency.

“I’m really kind of shocked by this,” said Van Den Bossche, a state employee who has lived in the neighborhood since 2005. She said she learned about the change in plans from an Illinois Times reporter.

“If this does go through, I just hope Helping Hands makes this successful for the tenants as well as for the surrounding neighborhood,” she said.

Helping Hands, 1023 E. Washington St., operates an emergency homeless shelter, permanent supportive housing and other programs for people experiencing homelessness.

Officials from Helping Hands wouldn’t speak to Illinois Times or answer questions about the project beyond what the nonprofit revealed in a Jan. 27 news release.

But Helping Hands officials have said in the past that supportive housing allows tenants to pay no more than 30% of their income for rent; Helping Hands, which already manages 24 supportive housing units in Sangamon County, covers the rest of the rent and sometimes utilities.

The nonprofit also provides caseworkers who regularly visit tenants, help them manage their finances, find jobs and deal with mental health and substance-use issues that may have contributed to their homelessness.

According to the Helping Hands press release, Park Street Apartments, sponsored by Helping Hands in partnership with Windsor Homes, “is still in the exploration phase” despite an announcement from IHDA that funding has been awarded.

It’s unclear what aspects of the project need to be finalized, though Niehaus said a final contract between Windsor Homes and Helping Hands still needs to be signed.

The Helping Hands release said the apartment complex, consisting of three two-story buildings, would increase permanent supportive housing in the community by 22 units and “focus on health and housing stability for seniors and veterans who have a disability and are experiencing chronic homelessness.”

One additional unit would be built for the complex’s manager, and there would be a “community space” on the first floor of one of the buildings. The manager’s unit and community space weren’t part of the initial plan when city officials approved the project last year.

It’s still to be determined what would happen to a single-family rental home on the property immediately west of the proposed complex, Niehaus said.

Based on IHDA documents, the project would be financed with almost $6 million in funds from the state and federal government and from Helping Hands, all intended to expand permanent supportive housing in the community.

Of the total, $590,000 would come from the IHDA Trust Fund, which an IHDA spokesman said may not need to be repaid. Another $4.7 million would come through a grant from IHDA and $800,000 would be contributed by Helping Hands, which receives most of its annual operating revenue from state government.

Plans call for Niehaus, who owns the property, to be paid $180,000 for land acquisition; $4.34 million, or $189,000 per unit, would be spent to build the 22 one- and two-bedroom apartments.

Proposed spending also would include $621,586 for Windsor Homes developer fees, $124,000 for reserves and $534,000 for expenses such as attorney and architectural fees, according to IHDA.

Niehaus said he looked into getting the site rezoned for a private apartment complex nine years ago but withdrew the proposal when it appeared the city council would turn him down.

He said nothing about the proposed partnership with Helping Hands was mentioned at the city council or zoning commission meetings in 2021 because he planned to build a private apartment complex until Helping Hands approached him after the zoning change was secured.

Van Den Bossche said she and other neighbors still are upset that city officials turned aside their concerns about increased traffic safety issues that the complex could bring to the neighborhood along and near Park Avenue.

The south end of Park Avenue dead-ends just south of the site, she said, and the neighborhood already deals with drivers using Shiloh Drive and West Centre Street — both east-west roads — to travel between MacArthur Boulevard and apartments along Seven Pines Road and Chatham Road.

There are no sidewalks, curbs or gutters along Park Avenue, and lighting is poor, Van Den Bossche said. There is a two-story, eight-unit apartment complex immediately north of the Park Street Apartments site.

Van Den Bossche said it’s unclear whether the traffic concerns originally aired by neighbors will be valid if the tenants are formerly homeless people who may not be able to afford cars.

But caseworkers probably would be driving to the site, she said. At night, the complex’s tenants would have to use a dark street without sidewalks, and they would be a half-mile from the nearest city bus stop, she said.

“As far as the safety concerns, it’s still an issue,” Van Den Bossche said.

Springfield resident Tom Shafer, a former resident of the neighborhood who spoke to the council on behalf of neighbors opposing the project in September, learned of the new plans for the complex from Illinois Times but said he had heard rumors of the change.

People in the neighborhood of the proposed site have reacted to the rumors with “barely controlled anger and disbelief,” he said. The complex’s location isn’t ideal for people without cars, Shafer said.

The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission recommended approval for the zoning change, and the Springfield Planning and Zoning Commission voted 6-4 on Aug. 18 to recommend city council approval for the change, despite a petition opposing the project signed by about 80 neighborhood residents.

Niehaus received zoning approval from the city council on Sept. 21 to change the zoning from single-family to multifamily to allow for the Park Street Apartments project.

Niehaus told council members at the meeting that the complex would result in less than a 1% increase in traffic in the neighborhood.

The council vote was 8-2 in favor of the change, with the neighborhood’s alderman, Joe McMenamin of Ward 7, voting “no” along with Ward 2 Ald. Shawn Gregory.

McMenamin said he opposed the rezoning because of the lack of nearby public transportation, a road he considered unsafe and a lack of sidewalks in a neighborhood with some homes in the city and some in unincorporated Woodside Township.

The City Council voted a few weeks later to annex the apartment complex property into the city and require the owner to pay for the addition of a streetlight.

Dean Olsen is a senior staff writer for Illinois Times. He can be reached at doelen@illinoistimes.com.
Another criminal investigation for Jenny Thornley
State employee fired for alleged theft collected benefits after termination

MERIT BOARD | Dean Olsen

A former Illinois State Police Merit Board employee who was fired by the small state agency in July 2020 for alleged felony theft, forgery and official misconduct received $71,400 in workers’ compensation and disability payments after her termination.

It’s unclear why Jenny Thornley, 41, received the benefits for more than a year based on her claim of sexual assault, even after an independent review conducted by a Chicago consulting firm at the request of the board said the assault likely did not take place.

The case of Thornley, a former campaign volunteer for Gov. JB Pritzker who says she was sexually assaulted by her boss, has become political in an election year when Pritzker is seeking a second four-year term.

Republican leaders in the General Assembly suggested in a Jan. 4 letter to the Democratic governor and leaders of the Democratic-led House and Senate that Pritzker’s administration engaged in an “apparent pattern of obstruction of justice” in the handling of Thornley’s case.

The Republicans said through a spokeswoman that they haven’t received any responses. The governor’s press secretary didn’t respond to Illinois Times’ requests to comment.

Thornley’s sexual harassment lawsuit against the board, the state and former board executive director Jack Garcia remains pending in federal court for the Northern District of Illinois. Thornley alleged in the lawsuit that she was in Garcia’s office in Springfield reviewing paperwork on Jan. 23, 2020, when Garcia approached her from behind and “groped” her right breast.

Garcia, 60, of Orland Park, and the Merit Board denied Thornley’s allegations. The former Illinois State Police officer joined the agency in 2017 but left in September 2021 to become public safety director for the Chicago suburb of Burbank.

Garcia’s attorneys have said in court documents that when Thornley learned Garcia was gathering information about her alleged overtime scam, she “fabricated the most explosive allegations that she could invent … in an effort to discredit, hurt and neutralize Garcia.”

Thornley was fired July 21, 2020, by the five-member board, which oversees an agency that certifies state police candidates for appointment, certifies troopers as eligible for promotion and disciplines ISP officers.

Thornley was indicted by a Sangamon County grand jury in September for allegedly cheating the agency in 2019 out of between $10,000 and $100,000 in overtime she never worked. She had an annual salary of $86,556.

A $450,000 internal investigation conducted by the McGuireWoods firm at the Merit Board’s request and completed in July 2020 questioned Thornley’s credibility.

McGuireWoods said there was insufficient evidence that Garcia sexually assaulted Thornley but there was sufficient evidence that she arranged fraudulent overtime payments.

Thornley entered a plea of not guilty in response to the charges, which carry a potential penalty of four to 15 years in prison and a $25,000 fine.

Neither she nor her lawyer, Carl Draper, would comment to Illinois Times after a Jan. 18 status hearing in the court case, and Draper wouldn’t comment on an apparent ongoing state investigation into whether she defrauded the state’s workers’ comp and disability programs. Thornley remains free on her own recognizance.

Former Merit Board program director Emily Fox, who since has replaced Garcia as executive director, complained to the Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor in September 2020 that the governor’s Central Management Services agency granted Thornley’s workers’ compensation request without allowing the Merit Board to contest the decision. Thornley first filed the request in February 2020.

In a Dec. 15, 2020, letter, deputy inspector general Antoinette Kwateng, told Fox that the Merit Board’s complaint should be addressed by the Merit Board rather than the inspector general, according to documents Illinois Times obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request.

Fox told Garcia in Sept. 21, 2020, email that CMS manager Kevin Richey told Fox he “has the authority to override any case, which he did in this particular case, since according to Workers Compensation laws, the Merit Board wrongfully terminated Jenny Thornley.”

After being turned down by the inspector general’s office, the Merit Board filed a complaint with the Illinois Department of Insurance Workers’ Compensation Fraud Unit on July 23, 2021. According to an email from Fox to Garcia later that month, insurance department official Brad Lucchini called the workers’ comp payments to Thornley “a clear case of fraud.”

The department opened a criminal investigation, Fox said.

The result of the CMS decision meant Thornley received $63,261 in workers’ compensation benefits from July 21, 2020, through Sept. 7, 2021. The end date was shortly before the grand jury indictment.

Thornley also received $8,140 for the time period “as a result of incurring a work-connected disabling condition with the State Police Merit Board,” according to a State Employees Retirement System official responding to a Freedom of Information request.

CMS spokeswoman Cathy Kwiatkowski didn’t respond to an email that asked why it took so long to cut off Thornley’s benefits.

SERS paid the $8,140 disability benefit to Thornley as part of a state-mandated formula that allows state workers with legitimate claims to receive benefits totaling 75% of their regular pay, SERS director Tim Blair said.

The systems continued to pay the disability portion of the benefit, and deferred any investigation into the legitimacy of Thornley’s claim to CMS, he said.

The benefits were halted, Blair said, when the overtime fraud indictment was imminent and “it became clear there was more to this.”

An expanded version of this story is available at illinoistimes.com.

Black History Month
CAP CITY | Karen Ackerman Witter

Here’s a sampling of Black History Month programs in the capital city.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and Alderman Shawn Gregory, are offering creative hike and bike tours. Put on your hiking shoes and join a guide for a 90-minute hike around Oak Ridge Cemetery. Learn about the history of Springfield’s Black community, including tragedies and success stories in the face of prejudice and adversity. Hikes depart from the Lincoln Tomb parking lot at 2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays in February.

Bring your own bicycle and follow a guide on an easy-paced tour of Springfield’s historic sites on Feb. 21 and 26. The Lincoln Home, the Dana-Thomas House, and Springfield’s first Black firehouse are some of the places featured. Enjoy a hot cocoa break at the Route History Museum, sponsored by the Springfield Bicycle Club. The five-mile, two-hour, round-trip bicycle ride departs from the Dana-Thomas House parking lot at 1 p.m. Tours are free; reserve your spot at historic Springfield, dnr.illinois.gov.


Adults and teens are invited to join the Illinois State Museum in an online book club discussion of Ida B. the Queen on Feb. 23, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Celebrate the legacy of Ida B. Wells – journalist, suffragist and anti-lynching crusader. Registration is required for the Zoom program https://bit.ly/IdaBookClub.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum will debut its new “For the People” Speaker Series on Feb. 24 at 7 p.m. Tamika Ranley will discuss her book, At the Threshold of Liberty: Women, Slavery and Shifting Identities in Washington, D.C. She reveals how enslaved, fugitive, and free women imagined new identities and unrestricted lives. Admission is free; reservations are required https://www.tifx.com/ticket-sales/ALPMSpecialEvents/2469/event/1258045.
Springfield is planning almost $23 million in federally funded infrastructure improvements in the fiscal year that begins March 1 as part of a city budget plan flush with cash from COVID-19 relief funds and benefiting from sales and income tax revenue connected with surging consumer demand.

The projects, to be funded from the total $33.8 million the city expects from the American Rescue Plan Act, are among one-time expenditures outlined in the proposed $179 million corporate fund budget for fiscal 2023. The budget could be approved by the City Council as soon as Feb. 15.

Increases in both sales tax revenue and the local share of the state income tax — all fueled by 2021’s COVID-related enhanced unemployment benefits and skyrocketing consumer spending — will leave the city with an almost $17 million surplus at the end of this month and a record $50 million in reserves.

The situation, according to city budget director Bill McCarty, means that for the new fiscal year, “We’re in good shape. We’re in a good situation now, like a lot of cities, just because of what I call the ‘perfect storm’ of the pandemic, with stimulus money both to the consumer and directed to local governments like ourselves,” he said.

But for the long term, McCarty said, “I don’t want people to think everything is hunky-dory now, because it’s not.”

He noted that the city's mandated contributions to fund the city's fire and police pensions continue to increase every year. The required contribution is $28 million in the new budget year.

Beginning in 2018, required pension payments exceeded the $23 million collected annually in property taxes for city government, McCarty said.

“What has been happening for some time now is that pension costs are cannibalizing operations,” he told Illinois Times. “It’s going to get harder and harder to make annual mandated pension payments.

Springfield and other municipalities have called on the General Assembly to restructure the state’s municipal pension-related debts so the current ramp designed to achieve the mandated 90% funding level by 2040 is extended 10 more years.

The legislature isn’t expected to take action this year, however. And there’s been no interest from the City Council to raise the city’s property tax rate, which hasn’t changed since the 1980s, even though Springfield’s rate is lower than the municipal rate in Urbana, Champaign, Peoria, Normal, Bloomington and Decatur.

Springfield’s overall proposed fiscal 2023 budget of $626.3 million for all funds — including the corporate fund and funds involving City Water, Light & Power — contains $3.5 million for water projects, $8 million for sewer projects, $6 million for road modernization and $12 million for four fire station relocations. Almost $23 million for those projects would come from ARPA dollars.

Included in the ARPA-funded projects would be $530,000 to install 13 aeration units on Lake Springfield to address periodic complaints about odor and taste of city drinking water.

The budget would expand community policing by adding two neighborhood officers and one new school resource officer, fund 100 new in-car computer systems for police cars, prepare for the opening of a new branch and yard-waste drop-off facility, purchase additional street sweepers, finance an expanded demolition program for condemned properties and expand marketing efforts for local events such as History Comes Alive.

Mayor Jim Langfelder said another item of interest to consumers in the budget outline is a “smart” parking meter pilot project that would install about 50 meters that would accept both coins and credit cards and would have a GPS system built in to help drivers find open spots downtown.

A corporate fund balance projected at $33.7 million by the end of February 2023 would serve the city well if the nation’s economy heads into a recession that some economists have predicted sometime in the next few years, according to McCarty.

He noted that federal stimulus money flowing to the city will end in 2022, enhanced unemployment benefits to residents have stopped, and consumer demand likely will level off by the end of fiscal 2023.

But McCarty said a 2021 state law that resulted in higher sales taxes for the city from online purchases will continue to boost city coffers.

Dean Olsen is a senior staff writer for Illinois Times. He can be reached at dosen@illinotimes.com.
From Springfield to statewide

Veteran prosecutor John Milhiser running for secretary of state

ELECTIONS | Scott Reeder

It’s been a long time since someone from Sangamon County sought a state constitutional office, but this year veteran prosecutor John Milhiser, a Springfield resident, is seeking the GOP nod for secretary of state.

Since stepping down as U.S. attorney in the Central District of Illinois, Milhiser has taught government, English and history at Lawrence Education Center in Springfield. He said there is a pervasive cynicism among his students about elected officials and government service.

And that has to change," he said. “So, when I think of running statewide, the secretary of state’s office, for me, is the perfect place to try to fix that.”

Just how he plans to reduce cynicism by holding the office that issues driver’s licenses, among other things, is a bit of an open question. But Milhiser said the key is “customer service,” and his experience as Sangamon County state’s attorney has prepared him.

“We are service-oriented every day in how we are dealing with the public – a lot of people don’t realize that. We deal with victims and victims’ families. We have a walk-in system where people would show up every single day wanting criminal charges filed, or just needing help with something,” he said. “It’s kind of like a hub for people who have problems. And we can try to help them out. So that’s the customer service aspect of it. And when I look at state government, there is the secretary of state’s office. That’s the office that most people are going to have the most contact with state government.”

The secretary of state’s office, which is best known for issuing driver’s licenses and license plates, has a variety of other functions such as promoting organ donation, adjudicating suspension of driver privileges, archiving state records, operating the state library, promoting literacy, maintaining the Capitol and operating its own statewide police force.

The post is often sought as a steppingstone to higher office, according to Mike Lawrence, a longtime political observer. Jim Edgar and George Ryan both served as secretary of state before being elected governor. Alan Dixon was secretary of state when he was elected to the U.S. Senate.

Milhiser declined to say whether he has any desire to eventually run for higher office.

Jesse White has held the high-profile post for 24 years but is not seeking reelection.

It’s time to look for ways to maintain motorist safety and improve customer service at the drivers’ services facilities scattered across Illinois’ 102 counties, Milhiser said. The facilities are notorious for long lines and lengthy wait times.

Milhiser said studies show that young drivers and older drivers are the ones most likely to be involved in traffic accidents.

“I think we should do everything we can to minimize the amount of time people in the middle spend at one of our offices,” he said. He added more services should be available online.

Milhiser was critical of the current officeholder, Jesse White, for shutting down drivers’ services facilities for extended periods during the pandemic. He said the state needs to work toward keeping offices open.

Milhiser is running as part of a slate of six candidates seeking statewide office. At the top of the slate is Aurora Mayor Richard Irvin, who is running for governor. The group reportedly has the support of Illinois’ richest person, Ken Griffin, a Chicago investor.

“All of the slate candidates have very similar backgrounds in terms of being reformers, being people who may not have taken the traditional track but have a record of public service and fighting corruption,” said Justin Giorgio, a spokesman for Milhiser’s campaign.

Milhiser served for three years as the top federal prosecutor in the 46-county Central District of Illinois, a post he was appointed to by President Donald Trump in October 2018. He was later confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate and served until February 2021, resigning at the request of President Joe Biden. Such resignations are standard when there is a change in administrations.

Before becoming U.S. attorney, Milhiser was the twice-elected Sangamon County state’s attorney. He began his legal career in that office in 1997 and spent time in the juvenile, civil and felony divisions before entering private practice in 2003. He returned to the state’s attorney’s office in 2008 as the first assistant. He was appointed to the top spot in 2010 and elected in 2012 and 2016.

Milhiser is married to Seventh Circuit Judge Gail Noll and they have two college-age daughters. He received his undergraduate degree from James Madison University in Virginia and his law degree from University of Illinois.

Springfield Park District board member Robin Schmidt worked with Milhiser early in her career as a fellow assistant state’s attorney and later served under him when he became Sangamon County state’s attorney.

She described Milhiser as having solid administrative skills and heartfelt compassion.

“I’m grateful that he hired me back into the office after my husband John died,” she said.

John Schmidt was a justice of the Fourth District Appellate Court at the time of his death, but previously served as Sangamon County state’s attorney from 1999-2010. Milhiser was appointed to replace him.

Milhiser will face State Rep. Dan Brady, R-Bloomington, in the June 28 Republican primary.

On the other side, three Democrats are vying for their party’s nomination: Former state Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias, Chicago City Clerk Anna Valencia and Chicago Alderman David Moore.

The last Springfield resident to run for a constitutional office is believed to be former Springfield Mayor Mike Houston. In 1986, Houston captured the Republican nomination for Illinois treasurer, but lost in the general election to Democrat Jerry Cosentino.

Scott Reeder, a staff writer for Illinois Times, can be reached at sreeder@illinoistimes.com.
Rochelle Hartman was fired by Mayor Jim Langfelder Jan. 20 after two years as director of Lincoln Library.

2022 Jacqueline Jackson

**LETTERS**

We welcome letters. Please include your full name, address and telephone number. We edit all letters. Send them to editor@illinoistimes.com.

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**UNEQUAL TREATMENT**

The stark disparity in the city’s treatment of police chief Kenny Winslow and library director Rochelle Hartman leads to several troubling questions (Mayor fires director of Lincoln Library,” Jan. 27). Winslow sought a chief position in Bloomington after he was given a raise last year of over $7,000 to stay in Springfield after he was offered a deputy chief job in Franklin, Tennessee. In contrast, as happened with former economic development director Val Yazell in March 2021, Hartman was just summarily dismissed, without specific reason or any prior discussions about her performance. Mayor Jim Langfelder claimed Hartman “did not have plans to stay long-term, which she openly shared and was looking to move elsewhere.”

Some might object to the obvious hypocrisy, but it’s the sheer mendacity that astounds me. In fact, sexism does not begin to define the civic irresponsibility of firing somebody without any performance evaluation. That is simply not fair – especially when others are treated so differently.

Thomas Davis
Springfield

**A GOOD LEADER**

Thank you for your recent article by Rochelle Hartman, former director of Springfield’s Lincoln Library (“Lincoln Library is overdue,” Feb. 3). Ms. Hartman’s firing is a disappointment and loss for Springfield.

She articulated the services and programs of a strong public library. She pointed out the challenges facing public libraries today – working with the homeless, encouraging young adults to use the library, managing to deliver books during COVID and developing family and community programs, especially for those without access to the Internet.

Public libraries are a community anchor and asset. They are led by strong leaders with appropriate training who respond to community needs. Ms. Hartman has experience, knowledge and commitment.

She rightly notes the challenges of being a librarian in our city’s form of government – a library board with minimal authority – and being a city department, rather than a major civic community institution.

Kathryn M. Harris, retired director of library services
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum
Bridget L. Lamont, retired director, Illinois State Library

**DOUBLE STANDARD?**

The cover story “More girls accuse detective’s son of sexual abuse” is both interesting and astounding at the same time (Feb. 3).

It’s interesting in that a person would have to ask, what if this was a 22-year-old African American male from Springfield in Taylorville waving a gun at 2:30 in the morning, drinking alcohol with underage, white teenage girls and in possession of more than the legal amount of marijuana in the car? Would that African American male be given the same opportunity to sleep off his drunken state in a residential neighborhood until the sun came up and he was able to drive home free as a bird?

It’s astounding in that Taylorville police chief Dwayne Wheeler reviewed the entire body camera video with an Illinois Times reporter and two of his senior officers and said the officers handled the situation appropriately and he could see no evidence that Merreighn was given any preferential treatment. But he acknowledged that officers have discretion on how to handle minor offenses.

I find this astounding in that Chief Wheeler uses professional courtesy as an excuse for his officers not doing their job.

Bill Baukett
Springfield

**BRAVE GIRLS**

These brave young girls spoke up to get this predator off the streets. It’s taken way too long, but hopefully he goes away for a long time. Thank you for covering this story, Illinois Times.

Amy Rourke Jones
Via Facebook.com/illinoistimes
I think by now you can see why Gov. JB Pritzker's campaign spent so much money over the past month or so on TV and digital ads touting the state's improved fiscal position. Illinoisans have been (accurately) fed fiscal horror stories about their state for decades. I don’t have to tell you that Illinois is infamous for its fiscal ineptitude on a grand scale. I wrote years ago that, collectively, we suck at governing here. Huge pension debts, constantly on the verge of a junk bond rating from New York, a narrow tax base that doesn’t tap into services and upper incomes, and governors who either don’t care about the consequences of their decisions or are too inept to fix or ameliorate the problems they know exist.

So, those ads, I believe, were aired in order to prepare the ground for the governor’s budget proposal he submitted last week. “For the first time in more than 20 years,” a television news anchor says in one of the ads, “a bond ratings agency upgraded Illinois’ credit rating.”

“This upgrade means lower costs for taxpayers,” another anchor explains. “JB’s straightening out the state’s finances, passing balanced budgets, and getting bills paid on time,” a guy named Bill Hincks claims in another ad.

Team Pritzker could see the spending and revenue numbers as they came in for the past few months and they knew that the state had at least temporarily turned the corner. But they also likely knew they needed to get the word out there before the governor laid out his new budget which will pay down debt and temporarily cut taxes so people would be more likely to buy into it.

“For years in Illinois, they left bills unpaid, ruined our credit, and racked up over a billion dollars in interest penalties,” Pritzker said in an ad that started running in early January. “As Governor, I was determined to help fix the financial mess. Now, Illinois is keeping its promises by passing real balanced budgets. We're cutting costs, paying bills on time and paying down our debt -- saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. And our credit rating has been upgraded for the first time in 20 years.”

The Illinois Republican Party responded to that spot by claiming the governor was, “launching a new political ad that laughably tries to convince Illinois families 'we're on the right track.'” Everyone pretty much believes the state is messed up, so it’s not a difficult pitch to make. But then came last week’s budget address. Pritzker proposed a billion-dollar, one-year tax cut that was widely derided by Republicans, who didn’t mention that two top House Republicans had proposed an eerily similar temporary tax cut a couple of months ago. One of those two Republicans is now Republican gubernatorial candidate Richard Irvin’s running mate. Irvin has called the tax cut a “gimmick,” and an attempt to “buy off” voters. I haven’t yet had a chance to ask him about his running mate’s plan.

The governor also wants to direct an extra half a billion dollars into the state’s pension systems to pay down debt, which he says will save taxpayers $1.8 billion in the long run. The College Illinois savings program was deeply in debt, so Pritzker wants to wipe it out with $230 million, which will save taxpayers even more money down the road. Almost $900 million will go to pay off a health insurance debt that the state has had for longer than I can remember. And $800 million will be deposited into the state’s empty rainy-day fund.

The Republicans objected, saying it was all an illusion. The budget coffers are over-flowing with money because of federal stimulus programs. They’re not wrong, but those things I mentioned were all one-time expenditures.

Hey, we’ll see how long this fiscal bliss lasts. One of the reasons these tax cuts and other budgetary moves are one-year plans is because things could go south in a hurry if the federal stimulus programs really do end and state and local governments are again left to fend for themselves. And if we slide into recession, then Illinois could wind up right back where it started: In a very deep hole.

But if it all eventually goes to heck in a handbasket again, I can at least look back with a smile on this relatively brief window of financial pleasantness when I’m old and decrepit. It’s really quite nice. I hope we can keep it this way. But this is Illinois, after all.
I picked up the phone the other day and made a dinner reservation for a Valentine’s Day date.

The manager wrote down, “Party of two for 7:30 p.m.”

I couldn’t help but smile. It will be my 20th Valentine’s Day date in a row with the same person.

Folks sometimes ask what brought us together. It wasn’t Cupid’s arrow, it was dog urine.

You see, I met my wife, Joan, on a blind date right before Thanksgiving 2001. We decided to go out again, so I found myself agonizing over what we should do on a second date. I knew she liked animals because she was a veterinarian. So, I invited her to go for a walk with me in Springfield’s Washington Park with my Labrador retriever, Griz.

He was a nice dog. But we were two single males who had lived together for eight years. He wasn’t too keen on sharing me with anyone else. So, he viewed Joan with a great deal of suspicion.

“He never takes his eyes off of you – ever,” Joan said as we walked through the park with Griz leading the way. As we walked, we talked about family, God, careers and other deep stuff.

After the walk, we went to my house to watch a movie. No sooner did we sit down on the sofa than Griz plopped down – right between us. We petted him as we watched Russell Crowe in Gladiator.

Occasionally, our fingers would touch as we both stroked the Labrador’s fur. A little tingle ran up my hand each time our fingers brushed against each other. But Griz wasn’t so impressed. He watched me intently but pointedly ignored this woman – an intruder in his lair.

After the show was over, Joan decided she was going to win his heart. She stepped into the kitchen, squatted down and called Griz’s name. He responded to her calls with a glare. He walked toward her with stiff-legged trepidation. No sooner did he reach Joan than he hoisted his leg and urinated on her blouse.

I stood there horrified as the steady stream of urine raced down her side and formed a puddle on the floor. I kept thinking, “She’s never going to go out with me again.”

Joan gave me a big grin and said, “Don’t worry about it. It’s the third time it has happened to me this week.”

At that moment, I knew this would be the woman I would marry – she had grace under pressure. A month later, we were engaged to be married.

Spouses don’t come with instructions, and I’ll admit that even after 20 years, I’m at times bewildered as to how to respond to some situations.

But I do know this: She is the love of my life and puts up with me despite my many shortcomings. She completes me.

When we wed, friends felt the need to offer advice. Perhaps they came plying their unsolicited guidance because I entered the world of matrimony later than most. I was 38.

Regardless, their advice, while well intentioned, was not always full of merit.

For example, a twice-divorced college buddy told me: “Never hold anything back. Always tell her exactly what you are thinking. And when she does something you don’t like, make sure she knows it.”

On the other hand, a relative gave me this sage bit of wisdom: “Marriage is something you should go into with your eyes wide open and through with them half shut.”

When I ran this adage by my father, who ultimately was married to my mother for 58 years, he would just smile.

His folks were married 74 years, and my mother’s parents’ marriage lasted until the eve of their 50th anniversary, when a bad heart felled my grandfather.

They set good examples.

It is not enough to “feel” in love. Feelings are fleeting. Love is an action – not a mood. Love is choosing to put the needs and desires of someone else ahead of your own. I saw this sort of sacrificial love when my father would pick up my mother’s frail, cancer-stricken body and gently place her in bed. Or at harvest time when my mother would cook meals and take them into the field so Dad could always have something good to eat when he was working such long hours.

I only hope Joan and I can provide an even better example for our three daughters.

If they ever ask the secret to a happy marriage, I’ll say this: love, forgive and never give up.

Happy Valentine’s Day, dear.

Scott Reeder, a staff writer for Illinois Times, can be reached at sreeder@illinoistimes.com.
How’s Joe doing?

GUESTWORK | Lee H. Hamilton

It’s been a little over a year since Joe Biden took office as president, and though it’s still too early to draw firm conclusions about his performance, it’s not too early to discern some trends. Especially in light of how Biden positioned himself in the 2020 campaign and, I believe, how he still sees himself: as a centrist and a moderate who can unite the country by bringing professionalism to the White House and make the federal government work.

He began his presidency with, overall, a lot of good will: Many Americans longed for an end to the tumult of the Trump presidency and, as Biden himself put it, a return to normalcy. But since last year, the polls have shown him losing favor in Americans’ eyes.

In part, this was inevitable. He’s had to try to buck a very tough political climate, facing intense political division, the country’s unending culture wars, a riled-up opposition determined to thwart him, a pandemic that throws the country a new curve every time it seems to be settling down, and an inflation rate that has many Americans looking for someone to blame.

But the fact that they’ve settled on him as the culprit – in one recent CNN poll, 38 percent of respondents blamed the president, versus 26 percent eyeing issues created by the pandemic and 23 percent blaming corporations looking to capitalize on shortages – speaks to a larger problem. In truth, the economic news has largely been positive: unemployment has dropped, the stock market has had one of its best years in decades, and far more of the population has been vaccinated – and, thus, able to participate in the workforce – than was true a year ago. But neither Biden nor the Democrats in the majority have been able to capitalize on this turn of events to boost their public standing. As always, Americans want peace and prosperity, but with the picture so mixed, many feel ambivalent about the nation’s leadership.

To be sure, when it comes to international affairs, the picture is very different from a year ago. President Biden is experienced in foreign affairs and has put together a competent, professional team that’s more interested in getting things done quietly than in tweeting about their plans. There’s no question that the withdrawal from Afghanistan was a mess, but it stemmed from a laudable goal that most Americans support: to avoid forever wars. Biden clearly favors diplomacy to protect American interests, wants to protect human rights, and aims to promote democracy in our dealings with other nations – hence his tough stance toward both Russia and China, but with a clear preference for sustaining ties. He’s led us in rejoining the international community after a four-year period when we were barely part of it.

While I’d argue that Biden’s policies have generally been both bold and smart, judging them will depend on how events play out over the next year or more. Several things will be key. First, no matter how well-conceived a policy might be, everything depends on its implementation and how well the mechanisms of government deliver on its promise. This will be vital to Biden’s tenure in the White House.

Second, his biggest economic challenge in the near term will likely be inflation. It is far too early to judge him on it; so many other factors are contributing to it, including the issues bedeviling the global supply chain. Still, he will be judged by most Americans on his success or failure in tackling it.

And finally, he has made some misjudgments and mistakes along the way, including not demanding clear messaging from the CDC on public health advice during the pandemic, underestimating the impact of a huge ramp-up in public spending on inflation, and raising Americans’ hopes about COVID, bipartisanship and his ability to cajole cooperation in Congress in a way that reality simply wouldn’t allow. None of these need to be destructive of his presidency – but only if he and his advisers learn the lessons of a tough first year in office and become clear-eyed and realistic about what they can and cannot accomplish.

Lee Hamilton is a senior adviser for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice at the IU O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.
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Planning amidst uncertainty

WEDDING | Pamela Savage

Over the last two years, many couples planned weddings amidst uncertainty and held celebrations with caveats. The wedding industry found itself recalibrating its offerings to provide safe and meaningful experiences for engaged couples and their families. All of this change, while hard, has also provided an exciting opportunity for weddings to look a little different than they have in decades past. As we look to the future of weddings, some creative and meaningful trends emerge.

Focus on your guests’ experience

Weddings have always been, and will always be, about the couple. That said, the pandemic has asked couples to look even more carefully at how their guests experience their big day. From everything to winnowing down a guest list to following safety protocols, for better or for worse, couples are now asked to consider their guests from a different angle. Stephanie Endsley, owner and operator of Springfield’s Having a Ball Productions, says that now more than ever, couples are asking: Who truly needs to be in attendance, and what is the best way to accommodate my important people? Endsley says that she sees couples dialing their weddings back to simpler times. “A lot of couples are focused on asking themselves, ‘Who do we actually love, care about and treasure?’ And this is creating an elevated experience for those treasured guests,” she said.

In this vein, some brides and grooms have chosen “minimoonies” or “micro-weddings,” while others have favored local weddings over destination ones, in order to reduce the need for air travel. Recent weddings have also seen guest involvement that goes beyond the old-school signature-filled guest book. More and more, wedding guests are being thoughtfully included in ceremonies, using their talents to fill roles such as officiants, musicians or florists. From a safety standpoint, the experience of being a guest at a wedding has changed dramatically. No longer are guests crowded around tables, jockeying for elbow room. Similarly, venue regulations are more often requiring plated or individual servings rather than buffet or passed options, resulting in more focus on tasty and creative food options. Lastly, many weddings now include a livestream of the event in order to include treasured guests who aren’t able to attend in person.

Make your wedding pivot-proof

Couples planning weddings in the next few years may have concerns about contingency plans in the case of future shutdowns, or if someone falls ill. With this in mind, couples would be wise to review vendor contracts carefully and to ask specific questions about whether backup plans are possible. One way to ease stress around having to make changes to your wedding is to consider virtual save-the-dates or invitations for your event. Not only do virtual invitations assuage worries about mail delivery and waste, they allow couples to easily update guests about any postponements or changes in location, rather than relying on their extended-family phone trees.

Lastly, when personalizing specific aspects of your wedding such as cocktail napkins, signage to display at the bar or bag tags for favors, be wary of including the date or location of your event. Stick to classic monograms, such as the couple’s names or other aspects of the ceremony that will not change. That way, if you do end up having to make changes, you won’t be stuck with dozens of unusable personalized favors.

Pop-up outside (of the box)

Unsurprisingly, outdoor venues for weddings are more popular than ever. Open-air tents are extremely sought after and another new trend is the pop-up wedding. Audrey Kondelis, event designer and owner of Springfield’s Pole Barn Chic Events, describes a pop-up wedding as a wedding that can be thrown wherever you are. Pop-up weddings are spontaneous, and perhaps a more low-key option than traditional weddings, but they have increased in popularity and acceptability over the course of the pandemic. Vendors bring a couple whatever they may need to transform a space such as a public park or residential backyard into a full-blown wedding space.

Kondelis says Pole Barn Chic will “come and bring it all. We bring a tent, tables, linens, chairs, full catering, props, decor, flowers, a DJ, even a dance floor.” In fact, Kondelis is currently working with a couple to transform Camp Illinek, traditionally used for local scouting events, into a perfect wedding venue.

For Kondelis, and for all of us, “COVID changed every dynamic of the world. We all knew everything one way and this forced us to think outside of the box,” she noted.

Endsley of Having a Ball Productions agrees that the pandemic has been devastating, but says the couples that she has been lucky enough to work with have been so grateful to spend time with loved ones in creative and exciting new ways.

May we all be able to look at new opportunities with an open mind and a celebratory heart. □

Pamela Savage is a freelance writer in Springfield who looks forward to celebrating more with friends and family in 2022.
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FEATURE

Making it meaningful

WEDDING | Pamela Savage

For some couples, the second you get engaged, it seems as though people immediately begin asking about your plans for the Big Day. Personally, I remember feeling as though I had zero clue as to how to plan such a special and important party, and there isn’t necessarily a guidebook on creating the experience that will be most meaningful to you as a couple. Nowadays, with pandemic concerns, wedding planning has the potential to feel even more uncertain and confusing.

That said, may I present a more optimistic perspective? I spoke with a few Springfield-area couples about what planning and throwing a wedding in the midst of a pandemic was really like. These encouraging couples were able to focus on what really mattered to them in order to shape memorable and festive celebrations. Read on to find out more about these couples’ hiccups and triumphs in designing their special days.

Dr. Katie Booth (formerly Buskirk) of Springfield and her husband, Jesse Booth of Dawson, were wed in June of 2021. The couple married on the Booth family farm with just 25 guests in attendance. Planning for a small ceremony on a private property allowed the Booths to avoid any changes due to COVID, and they encourage other couples considering a smaller wedding to follow their instincts.

Says Jesse Booth, “Don’t be afraid to have a small, intimate wedding or reception. In these uncertain times, smaller events minimize the stress leading up to the big day. It is OK to pass on luxuries to preserve your bank account and sanity.”

One priceless addition that the Booths included in their wedding was a homemade wedding arch. Several of their friends and family have since used the arch, and the couple plans on installing a swing inside the arch for their family to enjoy at their forever home.

Matthew and Kylie Gaitros married with just their minister and parents in attendance in November 2020. The ceremony was quick, and the couple didn’t have the traditional tuxedo and gown. While glad to be married, they were left craving a celebration with friends and family, so they planned a larger event for February 2021. When their February reception needed to be rescheduled, they looked to April, and finally to September.

Kelly Gaitros says that the experience was “stressful,” and that it was hard not to take all of the postponements and changes to heart, but at the end of the day, “Having one another made up for it all.” Ultimately, the Gaitroses had their perfect day with 75 guests in attendance at the Decatur Conference Center and Hotel on Sept. 18, 2021. Kelly was finally able to wear her wedding gown, and recalls Matthew seeing her at the end of the aisle as a moment that they’ll both remember forever.

Hannah Koehler married Austin Mudd in October of 2020 in her parents’ backyard in Springfield. Once they decided on a backyard wedding, the other details came together quickly. The couple rented a tent, borrowed a pop-up bar from a friend, asked another friend to DJ and had food catered from The Grainery in Pleasant Plains, a Koehler family favorite.

Austin built the couple an arbor to stand under during the ceremony, and Hannah’s brother, Mitch Koehler, got ordained online so that he could act as their officiant. Hannah and her mother put together all of the table décor, and Hannah made her own bouquet to carry down the aisle. All of these sentimental and unique details added up to a one-of-a-kind wedding for the Mudds.

Says Hannah, “Remember, you are planning for a marriage that lasts forever, not a wedding that lasts 12 hours. It’s easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of wedding planning, but the true meaning of the day is marrying your best friend.”

Her other piece of advice for planning a wedding during these uncertain times is to be flexible. “Venues and vendors are booking months in advance. If you aren’t wanting to wait to marry your person, like we weren’t, keep looking for options. There are plenty of local vendors and venues in our area.”

With those encouraging words and beautiful ceremonies in mind, we wish area couples every luck in planning their own unique, meaningful weddings.

Pamela Savage is a freelance writer in Springfield. She last planned a wedding over 12 years ago and greatly enjoyed accompanying these lovely couples along memory lane.

Hannah and Austin Mudd were wed under an arbor that Austin made. Hannah’s brother, Mitch Koehler, served as the officiant. PHOTO BY JILL GUM PHOTOGRAPHY
FEATURE

WEDDING VENUES

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**WEDDING | Stacie Lewis**

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Edwards Place
Once a popular site for social and political events in the 19th century, the historic Italianate mansion is perfect for small, elegant ceremonies. The parlor can seat up to 60. Additional space is available in the art gallery which seats 50 for dinner or up to 100 for cocktail receptions. $500-$800. 700 N. Fourth St., 217-523-2631. springfieldart.org. edwardsplace.org.

Erin’s Pavilion
Erin’s Pavilion features a 5,280-square-foot banquet hall to accommodate up to 300 guests and features a charming terrace with a panoramic, peaceful lakeside view, a banquet hall and two dressing areas for the couple. Caterers may be selected from our current list of pre-approved caterers. Southwind Park, 4965 S. Second St., 217-585-2941. springfieldparks.org.

Firefighters Postal Club
Located on Lake Springfield, the club is perfect for couples who want to show off their creativity. It seats up to 300 guests for banquet-style receptions. Public rentals are welcome and special pricing is available. $600-$1,300. 940 W. Lake Shore Drive. 217-691-6472. firefighterspostal.com.

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Hoogland Center for the Arts
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Clayville Historic Site

Rustic, peaceful and romantic are words that describe Clayville Historic Site. Located only 15 miles west of Springfield, Clayville’s rural setting is perfect for your special day. Our 100-year-old, climate-controlled barn leads into an open pavilion, with side curtains for year-round use. This allows us to accommodate up to 200 people. For larger groups there is space to set up a tent or use our picnic tables outdoors. Many brides choose to do rehearsal, rehearsal dinner, the ceremony and reception here. The fee for weddings is $1500, plus a $250 deposit. 12828 State Route 125, Pleasant Plains, 217-481-4430. clayville.org.

Edgewood Golf Club

Edgewood offers a distinctive banquet facility along with the peaceful atmosphere of the golf course. The upper-level banquet room offers panoramic views of the tree-lined golf course. Relax and enjoy a stress-free rehearsal dinner, bridal shower or wedding reception. We have seating accommodations for up to 250 people when including lower-level facilities. Edgewood Golf Club is just a short drive south of Springfield. 16497 Kennedy Road, Auburn, 217-438-6131. golfedgewood.com.

Elkhart Hill Farm

Elkhart Hill Farm offers an intimate outdoor venue set on a rustic and historic country estate just north of Springfield. This elegant, relaxed and hassle-free venue will leave your guests in awe. With an indoor seating of up to 75 guests or outdoor seating for 200, the farm is versatile for any size event. Menu creation is available to meet any budget needs. 4 Drake Lane, Elkhart, 217-523-4466. ElkhartHillFarm.com
If you want the best, look no further. Comprehensive planning. Impeccable service. Fantastic food. Our wedding specialist will help you design a menu that reflects your style and complements your tastes. You will work one-on-one to create a dining experience to remember. Call us at 217-787-9443 for all your wedding food needs.
Hamilton's at 110 North East
The South Ballroom seats 420, has a 1,023-square-foot dance floor, a bridal room and a special entrance for the bridal party. The Fireside Room holds 150 and has a 440-square-foot dance floor. The Westside Room's capacity is 80. The venue features free Wi-Fi, an elevator, outdoor courtyard for photos, fully customizable meal and bar service, ample parking and TV lounge. 110 N. East St., Jacksonville, 217-675-2720. hamiltonscatering.com. info@hamiltonscatering.com.

Hamilton's at the Lake
You can have a beautiful wedding ceremony and reception on the grounds of the Western Illinois Youth Camp. The craft hall, pavilion, dining hall and Krell cabin are all available. Rent rates depend on the duration of the event. 2244 4-H Club Road, Jacksonville, 217-675-2720. hamiltonscatering.com. info@hamiltonscatering.com.

Hayes Event Management
Select the perfect venue to fit your wedding dreams – Waters Edge Winery, The Wine Barn or the Annie Mercer Chapel or McClelland Hall, both located on the former MacMurray College campus. Groups of 10 to 500 can be accommodated. 221 Dunlap Court, Jacksonville, 217-473-5960.

Hill Prairie Winery
Couples can choose from several stunning sites, including next to the vineyard, pond, windmill, rolling hillside or inside a 100-year-old barn. Outdoor ceremonies accommodate up to 400, while inside events seat up to 170. We have a list of 11 caterers from which to choose. An extensive wedding services resource list is available. 23753 Lounsberry Road, Oakford, 217-635-9900. hillprairiewinery.com.

The Homestead
The Homestead is a rustic rural venue on a working 10-acre farm. It offers generous indoor and outdoor space for ceremonies and receptions for up to 300 people. Couples will enjoy this natural setting complete with dance floor, fire pit and full kitchen for your choice of caterer. Located northwest of Springfield on I-97 in Tallula. 217-502-0019. homesteadreceptioncenter.com.

Paul's Paradise
Paul’s Paradise is an event venue that can be rented by the hour, day or weekend, and includes an indoor/outdoor stage, audio and dance lighting system and two decorative patios. You will appreciate the large bridal suite with a private restroom, bridal bar, lounge area and private balcony. Perfect for 150-275 guests. 12430 State Route 125, Pleasant Plains, 217-971-7876. karawithpaulsparadise@mail.com.

Pole Barn Chic
Enjoy over eight acres and seating for over 500. Event planning, including food, music, photographer, flowers and decorations, are all taken care of for you. 217-685-7389. polebarnchic.com.

Prairie View Reception Center
Guests will be impressed with the elegantly updated interior of this 8,800 square-foot space. Complimentary event planner and professional staff; large hardwood dance floor and custom lighting, full bar service and your choice of caterers are all available for you. The venue accommodates up to 320 seated guests. 8865 State Route 4, Chatham, 217-483-7999. prairieviewreception.com.

Oak Terrace Resort
Oak Terrace Resort is an all-in-one location, outdoor wedding venue where you and your guests can enjoy your big day and utilize all the resort has to offer. Three different types of on-site lodging are available as is the outdoor wedding location, reception facility, golf course and Mulligan’s Bar & Grille. We are your stress-free wedding and reception venue. 100 Beyers Lake Estates, Pana, 217-539-4477. koltmanns@oakterreresort.com.

RiverBank Lodge
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The Venue at Parks’ Place
The Venue at Parks’ Place is located directly off of the Riverton exit of I-72 in a rural setting with ample parking. It offers a generous 4,200-square-foot reception room with access to an equipped commercial kitchen as well as a separate bar area. It is located just minutes from Springfield at 7075 Old Decatur Road, Riverton, 217-629-2009.
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It’s been an incredibly tough two years for weddings. Celebrations that weren’t completely canceled had to pivot hard and fast. Thankfully, wedding caterers have always been problem-solvers at their core. Whether it’s last-minute additional guests or a sudden thunderstorm at an outdoor wedding, a professional caterer is experienced at rolling with the punches and making it work. Those same skills were called upon as the industry at large shifted seemingly overnight in the wake of the pandemic. Now, nearly two years later, some lovely trends have emerged that will hopefully stick around for good.

**Seated dinners**

A seated dinner doesn’t have to mean formal or stuffy. “We’re having a lot of people asking for family-style meals right now,” said Brian Reilly, chef and owner of Cured Catering in Springfield. “It’s not quite plated, so it doesn’t have all the steps and formality of a plated dinner, and it’s fun. And often the folks sitting together and sharing the platters are together on a daily basis anyway, so it’s a great way to minimize touch-points and keep 200 individuals from running through a buffet line.”

**Traditional menus**

After two years of social distancing, couples are looking to nostalgia and comfort as they plan their event. “We’ve really seen people lean into traditional-type menus, classic Italian menus as well as hors d’oeuvres like caprese skewers and stuffed dates,” explained Grace Hamilton, director of weddings and events for Big Delicious Planet, a Chicago catering company that sources much of its in-season produce from an adjacent urban farm. “Honestly, this has been a wonderful shift, because it’s a great way to utilize seasonal ingredients and serve food that people are familiar with but still fresh and vibrant.”

**Individual plates**

Huge, opulent cheeseboards and appetizer displays may look nice, but they were really never a good idea from a sanitation perspective, and they often resulted in a lot of food waste. “One of the first COVID-related shifts was that our charcuterie platters became individual charcuterie plates,” explained Reilly. “Giving menu items this individual attention allows for a safer experience.”

Buffets still happen, he pointed out, but with servers dishing out food or grab-and-go plates set out so multiple guests aren’t handling serving utensils.

**Family recipes**

Ask your caterer if they can incorporate an heirloom recipe into your wedding menu. It’s a lovely way to personalize the event and pay homage to your roots. “I want each individual couple to put their spin on things and call it their own,” said Reilly. “When we get to go off-menu and do something that’s just for that couple, that’s what I really love to do.”

Favors are also another fun way to make your event more personal. Ask your caterer if they can bake cookies from a family recipe to give out to guests, or if they have custom items of their own. “People been really interested in giving out small jars of our house-made jams or honey from the beehives on our farm as favors,” said Hamilton from Big Delicious Planet. “They’re a nice little upgrade for guests and can be a fun reflection of the individual couple.”

**Make your wedding specific to you**

“The first thing I tell couples is that a wedding doesn’t have to be two entrees and a side and a salad,” said Reilly. One of his clients, Angela Speedie, is planning her June 2022 wedding in Petersburg. “We really want this to be fun and relaxed; we’re not formal people,” Speedie said. “We’re having a concert for the reception – music is such a huge part of who my fiancé and I are and how we met – and Cured is going to do a fancy taco bar,” she explained.

“I’m really trying to keep this on budget, so I’m focusing on spending money where it really counts,” Speedie said. “For us, that’s forgetting real flowers in favor of great food and music. We’re going to have beer from local brewery Hand of Fate and wine for guests, as well as a signature cocktail that Brian (Reilly) and I are working on. There will be a cash bar if anyone wants mixed drinks or something different.”

Ashley Meyer lives and writes in Springfield. She was lucky to work for Big Delicious Planet when she lived in Chicago over a decade ago. During that time, in addition to catering swanky weddings and weddings, BDP provided hospitality for some of the biggest music tours to come through the Windy City, including Jimmy Buffett.
CATERERS

WEDDING | Stacie Lewis

Arena Food Service, Inc.
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Conn’s Hospitality Group
Official caterer of The Inn at 835, Merchant House and Elkhart Hill Farm & Vineyard, specializing in weddings, corporate and social events. Conn’s offers full service, on and off-site catering for large and small occasions. The menu includes a wide variety of options to fit any taste and budget from upscale plated dinners to customizable buffets. Home or office delivery service is also available for events of 25+ guests for items such as gourmet boxed lunches, deli platters, soups and salads and barbecue from Li’l Willy’s Smokehouse. 835 S. Second St. 217-523-4466. angiec@connshg.com. connshg.com.

County Market Catering
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Cured Catering
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Fulgenzi’s Catering
Select from Italian, American and Cajun dishes. Service for up to 3,000. 2700 W. Lawrence Ave., 217-971-7517. fulgenziscaters.com. fulgenziscaters@gmail.com.

Hamilton's Catering Service
We offer a range of entrées from prime rib to fried chicken and from breakfast for dinner to taco bars. Customized menus are available. Prices vary and per-guest prices include uniformed staff, delivery and set up, buffet maintenance and clearing. 101 Main St., Franklin, 217-675-2720. hamiltonscatering.com. info@hamiltonscatering.com.

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Turasky’s Catering

Honoring leaders giving back to their communities

During Black History Month, AARP recognizes leaders taking action to give back and help build up their communities.


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Sheet Metal Workers Appreniceship

Sheet Metal Workers’ Local Union 218S Joint Apprenticeship Committee’s application process is now available year-round for their apprenticeship program. Visit www.sheetmetalworkers218s.com to complete an online application. To be considered for June 2022 hire, your online application must be received by March 31, 2022.

If unable to apply online, application packages are available for a non-refundable fee of $20 (cash only) at time of pick-up.

Where: SMW 218 Union Hall & Training Center
2855 Via Verde
Springfield, IL 62703

When: Tuesdays (except for holidays)
9:00 AM – Noon (CST)

Sheet Metal Workers’ Local #218-S Joint Apprenticeship Committee is an Equal Opportunity Employer
We used to put on pedestals countrymen deserving of honor for civic generosity or courage on behalf of good causes. Of late, we have taken down more statues than we have put up as the nation reconsidered the very notions of heroism.

Rhetorically, we have been knocking Abraham Lincoln off his pedestal for decades. Since the 1960s every generation of young activists seeking to explain why the citizens of this diverse and fractious nation are not yet singing in perfect harmony has looked at Lincoln’s legacy with a skeptical eye. Rude questions about Lincoln and race are being aired again as part of the national discussion excited by the Black Lives Matter movement.

As we approach the 113th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, a new generation of Americans have reflected on their freshman history courses and concluded that the Great Emancipator was neither great or an emancipator. How, they ask, can we end political violence against the Black community? The answer to today’s Lincoln bashers.

So historians must again tiptoe to their desks through the rubble of smashed icons. One of them is Michael Burlingame, the Naomi B. Lynn Distinguished Chair in Lincoln Studies at University of Illinois Springfield, who has risen to defend the late president with a new book, The Black Man’s President: Abraham Lincoln, African Americans, and the Pursuit of Racial Equality. Much of this material appears in others of his works but he has revisited and reshaped it in answer to today’s Lincoln bashers.

At its simplest, The Black Man’s President (the phrase, by the way, belongs to Frederick Douglass) is the story of Lincoln’s education in race matters, most of its being devoted to accounts of Lincoln’s interactions over his career with African Americans from all classes and backgrounds. That education began in Springfield, as Springfield’s Dick Hart has been trying to tell people for years. (The book is dedicated to Hart.) The young Lincoln didn’t need an education about slavery but he did need to learn about the lives and opinions of free Black people, and about the future of African Americans.”

The vignettes describing these encounters are neatly drawn and well illustrate the dimensions and the complications of the issues that various petitioners brought before the president, from colonization to voting rights to black enfranchisement in border states. Just as valuable is Burlingame’s appendix, “Evaluation of Evidence Cited to Illustrate Lincoln’s Purported Racism.” There is no harm and some chance of good when it came to race but an actual racist. The claim is plausible. He was born white and raised among poor whites who barely recognized Black people as human. He also spent his adult years before 1860 in Illinois, which, Burlingame has said, was arguably the most Negro-phobic state in the Union. That Lincoln might share some of the prejudices of those people is hardly remarkable. What was remarkable is how few of those prejudices he shared, a fact noted by a great many of the African Americans who knew him, and how he outgrew them.

In the opinion of many critics, it was not Lincoln’s personality but his policies that reveal his racism. Many of those policies date from the pre-presidential years, and his views changed and matured as he did. Now and in his own day, Lincoln is sometimes damned for doing only what was possible even if doing what was right was impossible. Burlingame better understands the depth and the social forces arrayed against Lincoln. What Lincoln’s critics damn as timidity was in fact patient politics. Lincoln knew that a president cannot lead until the people are ready to follow. So did Frederick Douglass, who wrote about the president, “He never shocked prejudices unnecessarily. Having learned statesmanship while splitting rails, he always used the thin edge of the wedge first—and the fact that he used it at all meant that he would if need be, use the thick as well as the thin.”

Lincoln traveled a long way toward equal rights for African Americans in his 56 years. Much of the country has not moved so far in 156. The fear that enfranchised Blacks would use the mechanism of democracy to unseat whites from their throne animates white antagonism to this day. Denying Black citizens the vote that Lincoln would have given them is the raison d’etre of today’s GOP. It would have grieved Springfield’s best son to know that, while he ended slavery, the old South would endure as a political and social movement.

Defenders of Lincoln risk being branded as dupes if not racists themselves. Burlingame by now knows what he was getting into; in his acknowledgements he thanks his publisher for daring to publish a book likely to “raise hackles in the stormy political and cultural climes of 2021.” In Burlingame Lincoln has a worthy advocate, judicious, informed and temperate, and open-minded readers will find his book well worth the reading.

Longtime TT contributor James Krohe Jr. is the author of Corn Kings & One-Horse Thieves, a history of mid-Illinois. His Illinois writing can be found at The Corn Latitudes at www.jameskrohejr.com.
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**217 Burger Week**

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Seven days was not enough time to try all the burgers, so most locations have added 3 days to Burger Week. Be sure to check 217foodweek.com to confirm the number of days being offered at each location, their hours and their offerings. Then get together with your friends and start making plans.

While you’re enjoying all the chef-inspired burgers, don’t forget your 217 Burger Week passport to plan your food journey and for a chance to win gift cards from local restaurants! Download your passport at 217foodweek.com or get one from inside the Illinois Times Feb. 3 and 10 issues. Be sure to send it to the IT office by Monday, Feb. 21.

The $7 price makes 217 Burger Week easy on the wallet and supports local restaurants.

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**Please drink responsibly**
Oysters are for lovers
And everyone else

FOOD | Ashley Meyer

Oysters are a natural choice for intimate entertaining. They've been touted as an aphrodisiac since Roman times and were reputedly consumed as a virility booster by Casanova himself. Questionable libido-boosting claims aside, oysters are indeed perfect to serve on a date night at home or indeed any occasion. Not only are they a delicious and refreshing delicacy, they're incredibly nutritious and sustainable. Unlike many farmed seafood products, cultivated oysters and mussels actually improve the marine environment around them.

There is an incredibly diverse variety of oysters available to consumers today. Five species of commonly cultivated oysters are farmed in North America: Eastern, European Flat, Pacific, Kumamoto and Olympia. Much like wine, oysters reflect the sense of place where they're from and each variety and growing region produces different flavors and nuances. “I generally prefer East Coast oysters like Blue Points,” said Zach Beatty, a fishmonger with Robert’s Seafood in Springfield. “I personally prefer their flavor and they can be easier to open. The West Coast oysters are a little more difficult to open…their shells are more ruffled and can be more brittle. I recommend Blue Point oysters for cooking, for example if you were making something like an Oysters Rockefeller, because they are easier to open and they're a little bigger so you get more bang for your buck.”

When shopping for oysters they first question to ask is how do you want to prepare them? If they're to be used in a casserole or stew, then the pre-shucked oysters are a great option. “Most people don't realize that shucked oysters will keep for a week or even two in a refrigerator, and they freeze really well too,” Beatty pointed out. For raw oysters he recommends specialty varieties such as French Kiss, which comes from the waters near New Brunswick. “I enjoy their briny sharpness on the front of the palate with a sweet finish at the back. They’re a really nice, bright style of oyster.”

When shopping for oysters to serve raw or on the half-shell in a preparation like Oysters Rockefeller (broiled oysters on the half-shell topped with spinach, parmesan and garlic bread crumbs) then look for heavy specimens that have a solid feel. When properly stored, oysters last for two weeks from their harvest date, so be sure to ask your fishmonger for that date. They should always have air circulating around them, so make sure that your oysters aren’t sealed up in a plastic bag on the way home. Once home, place them in a colander over a bowl or drip tray and cover them with a damp towel in the coldest spot in your fridge. Don't store them in or on ice because they will die in the fresh water that accumulates as the water melts.

To shuck the oysters, make sure the hand that’s holding the oyster is covered with a mesh glove or kitchen towel. Hold the oyster so that the bowl side is face down and the flat, thin-shelled top side facing up. “I definitely recommend that folks use an oyster knife. They're inexpensive and last forever,” Beatty advised. “Don't use a paring knife or something like a screwdriver – that’s a disaster waiting to happen.” Insert the tip of the knife into the crevice where the oyster hinges and push it forward as much as you can and twist to pop the hinge. Once it's popped then use the edge of the knife to detach the oyster from the top shell, then run it gently along the underside of the oyster to detach it from bottom shell. Try to keep as much of the delicious liquor in the shell as possible. “It’s really not hard, once you get the hang of it, and there are lots of good video tutorials available online,” Beatty advised.

Serve raw oysters on a rimmed tray filled with crushed ice. There are scores of delicious sauces traditionally served with raw oysters, from bright French mignonette to horseradish-spiked cocktail sauce. However, for the best and freshest oysters, a simple squeeze of lemon and a tiny dash of hot sauce is often all that’s required.

While Champagne is often thought of as the ultimate compliment for fresh oysters, there are a range of pairing possibilities to choose from. There is arguably no more fitting choice of wine than a crisp Muscadet from the Loire Valley. This seaside growing region produces wines with mineral and citrus notes, perfect for pairing with oysters plucked from the adjacent Atlantic Ocean. Oysters and stout beer is a classic if not surprising combination. Just like sea salt sprinkled on dark chocolate, the salty brine of the oyster is a delightful play on the rich malty flavors found in good stout beer. Saison-style ales, with their rustic, spicy funkiness, match well with oysters as well as IPAs with their hoppy, citrus-forward flavors. And for the cocktail lovers out there, consider mixing up a Vesper Martini. Made famous by James Bond in Ian Fleming’s 1953 novel, Casino Royale, this classic cocktail is comprised of three measures of Gordon’s, one of vodka, and half a measure of Lillet Blanc, topped off with a twist.

Ashley Meyer lives and writes in Springfield with her snow-loving husband and two young daughters.
Much more February music

Well, now wasn’t that a fun time of snow, shoveling, snow again, shoveling again, cancelled gigs, other gigs that weren’t but probably should have been, and all kinds of delightful experiences we can happily move on from. This weekend looks to be a bit different weatherwise so let’s see what’s out there in the bars and clubs without much concern of scheduling changes.

Thursdays are still slim pickings for live music, but Whisky Jack’s downtown on Fifth and Monroe is doing its best to beef up the night. This week, blues singer, songwriter and guitarist Timo Arthur sets up shop from 7 to 10 p.m. Timo, an extremely accomplished player who’s been touring with Brandon Santini for years, lined up Eric Tinsley on bass (he ain’t no slouch either) and the one-and-only Michael Wallace on drums to join in on the music-making.

In two weeks, on Feb. 24, your friend and mine, Johnny Burgin, rolls into town for a Thursday night gig. Also, Whiskey Jack’s has Joel Honey and Silas Tockey hosting a killer open mic on Mondays. This Saturday, Downstate, an acoustic-based trio of Conor McCormick, Griffin Eggleston and Garrett Eggleston, hits the window stage area bringing family harmonies to cool country songs with a true passion. And here’s a thanks to Whiskey Jack’s for keeping things going in that special spot where so much has happened in our Springfield music scene.

Look who’s back and playing at the Curve Inn on Friday night when Out of the Woods is out for a gig and onto Ric Major’s soundstage. You can expect a whole bunch of good rockin’ tonight as these guys are well-primed to do just that as they have done many times before and will do many times more.

Also on Friday, the Cocktails head over to Coonrod’s to try again after the snow cancelled them out last week. You know, you can’t keep a good cocktail down, or something like that, anyway. Saturday at Buzz Bomb, we have some visitors from out of town when Jonah Leatherman and his band drop in from Fort Wayne, Indiana, to rock ‘n’ roll the brewing company. Check our listings for much more music all over town through the weekend.

Before I get out of here, here’s a happy birthday shout-out to Tiffany Riech, half of the Tangents, along with Casey Cantrall doing the other part of the duo. I missed telling you about her Dirty Thirty birthday jam at Coni’s this past Wednesday, but I can direct you to three chances this weekend to see this terrific twosome and wish Tiffany a happy belated birthday. Friday, The Tangents land at Mowie’s Cue, Saturday takes them to Golden Fox Brewing in Decatur, a cool spot that’s been booking lots of Springfield talent lately, and Sunday you will find Tiffany and Casey singing, playing and entertaining at Slauterhouse Brewing in Auburn. How’s that for a weekend run? I love to see musicians working hard, staying busy and making it happen, I really, really do.

Let’s wrap up with a nod to Lil Higgy and the House Reckers, tearing up the Alamo on Monday with some harmonica-driven, old-school boogie woogie, foot-stompin’ blues. As always, Whiskey Ben’s spirit will be floating along in the ether, soaking up the sweet sounds. It’s a bit down the road, but on May 28, there will be a Ben Pope Celebration of Life at the Uptown Saloon in Farmersville hosted by Higgy and the boys. Let’s celebrate that life gone too soon.

Until next week, stay safe and warm.
LIVE MUSIC
Live music within 40 miles of Springfield. Dates, times, and locations are subject to change, so we suggest calling before attending an event.

Attention bands, bars and musicians: submit your shows and photos online at www.illinoistimes.com or by email calendar@illinoistimes.com.

Thursday
Feb 10
Open mic with Jess Cloyd
Buzz Bomb Brewing Co., 7-10pm

Jackpot Karaoke with Debbie Cakes
Curve Inn, 7-11pm

J.C.B. Entertainment Karaoke
La Fiesta Chatham, 7-11pm

Timo Arthur
Whiskey Jack’s Sports Bar, 7-10pm

Friday
Feb 11
Mike Burnett & The Suns
The Blue Grouch Pub, 7-11pm

The House Trio
Boone’s, 5:30-7:30pm

Tom Beverly and Geoff Ryan
Brewski’s Pub, 6:30-8:30pm

J.C.B. Entertainment Karaoke
Bunkers Bar, Illiopolis, 8pm-1am

Frank Parker’s Jambalaya Jazz
Buzz Bomb Brewing Co., 8-11pm

The Cocktails
Coonrod’s Bar, 7-10pm

Out of the Woods
Curve Inn, 6-10pm

John Drake
Golden Fox Brewing, Decatur, 7-10pm

Angel Brown’s Smooth N’ Blue Band
Lime Street Cafe, 7-10:30pm

Saturday
Feb 12
ReMix
The Blue Grouch Pub, 7-11pm

Jonah Leatherman
Buzz Bomb Brewing Co., 7-10pm

White Lightnin’
Coyote Den, Salisbury, 7:30pm

Fun DMC
Curve Inn, 6pm

The Tangents
Golden Fox Brewing, Decatur, 7-10pm

Angel Brown’s Smooth N’ Blue Band
Lime Street Cafe, 7-10:30pm

JackAsh
Maddy’s Tavern, Divernon, 6:30-9:30pm

Deja Voodoo
Route 66 Motorheads Bar, Grill & Museum, 8pm

Joel Honey
Slauderhouse Brewing Co., Auburn, 6-9pm

Karaoke with Cam and Lori
VFW Post #755, 8-11pm

Lick Creek
Weebles Bar & Grill, 8-11pm

Sunday
Feb 13
Legendary Shack Shakers
Bar None, 8pm

Monday
Feb 14
Lil Higgy and the House Reckers
The Alamo, 7pm

Open mic with Silas Tockey
Whiskey Jack’s Sports Bar, 8-11pm

Tuesday
Feb 15
J.C.B. Entertainment Karaoke
The Alibi, Rochester, 8pm-12am

Karaoke with Debbie Cakes
The Blue Grouch Pub, 7-11pm

Open mic with Jeff Cordes
George Rank’s, 7:30-10pm

Songwriter open mic with Tom Irwin
It’s All About Wine, 6-9pm

Wednesday
Feb 16
Open mic with Silas Tockey
Boone’s, 6-10pm

Karaoke with Debbie Cakes
Weebles Bar & Grill, 7-11pm
Ansar Shrine Patrol & Valley of Springfield Scottish Rite Sherman Athletic Club
300 S 1st Street, Sherman, IL

CHILI COOK-OFF

18th Annual ‘Mister Chilli Man’ Joe DeFrates Memorial Regional Chili Cook-Off”
Sunday, February 20, 2022
Doors Open at 11 AM • Daytona Race 1:30 PM • Chili Judging 3:00 PM
$10 per person
ALL U Can Eat Chilli Man Chili, Hot Dogs & Competition Samples
Daytona Race on the Big Screen Raffle Prizes 50/50 Drawings Silent Auction

Saturday, February 19, 2022
• Registration at 6 PM • Trivia Starts at 7 PM • COST: $20 per person
Includes Food and FREE Chili Cook-Off ticket for Sunday, February 20th
8 – 10 Person Teams • CASH PRIZE PAYOUTS
To reserve your table or pre-register contact:
Cory Mitchell (217) 691-2800 or email: cory.mitchelle@gmail.com
Or Valley of Springfield AASR office (217) 793-7728 or email: aasr1@comcast.net

Proceeds Benefit Shriners Hospital for Children of St. Louis & Children’s Dyslexia Center of Springfield

For Info or Tickets 217-697-1188 or 217-793-7728

Burger Bar & Back Door Lounge • Curve Inn • Casey’s Pub
Krekel’s Custard & Hamburgers • Main Gate Bar & Grill
Pease’s at BUNN Gourmet • Trade Winds Pub & Eatery
Silver Sevens Gaming Pub & Parlor • The Barrel Head
Smokey Bones Bar & Fire Grill • Weebles Bar & Grill
**THE CALENDAR**

**THE CALENDAR**

Send us your events! Deadline: 5pm Fri. Submit online at: www.illinoistimes.com  
Email: calendar@illinoistimes.com  
Dates, times and locations are subject to last-minute changes, so we suggest calling before attending events.

**Theater & Comedy**

Jodi White  
Fri., Feb. 11, 7pm at S. Dirksen Pkwy., 217-529-7777.

**Art & Architecture**

“Art for the Ages”  
Fridays, Saturdays, 12-6pm. Through Feb. 26. An exhibit by Pharmacy artist members interpreting reflections as either the mental process of careful thinking and consideration of a past event or idea, or the process of radiant light or shimmer mirrored off of a surface. Free. The Pharmacy Gallery and Art Space, 623 E. Adams St., 801-810-9278.

**Film & Television**

“The Man Who Sold His Skin”  
Sun., Feb. 13, 1pm. Part of the Springfield Art Association’s Molly Schlich International and Independent Film Series benefiting the Michael Victor II Art Library.

**Food & Drink**

217 Burger Week  
Through Feb. 16. Seven days was not enough time to try them all, so most locals have added three more days to Burger Week. Check 217foodweek.com to confirm the number of days being offered at a location. Get together with your friends and check out all the restaurants’ offerings. Various locations, 217-753-2226.

**History**

Lincoln’s birthday  
Sat., Feb. 12, 9am-5pm. Free admission in celebration of the 16th president’s birthday. See artifacts such as rare copies of books by abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, and a letter in which Lincoln discusses emancipation and the importance of Black soldiers. Free. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, 212 N. Sixth St., 217-558-8844.

**Nature, Science & Environment**

Chainsaw workshops  
Sat., Feb. 12, 10am advanced felling and bucking or 1pm beginner electric saws and safety. Safety clothing available or bring your own. Limited to 25 participants. Call 217-525-1410 to reserve a spot. Free. Adams Wildlife Sanctuary, 2315 E. Clear Lake Ave., 217-544-2473.

**Sports**

Springfield Jr. Blues vs. Anchorage Wolverines  
Fri., Feb. 11, 7pm at S. Dirksen Pkwy., 217-529-7777.

**Children’s Corner**

Community appreciation weekend  
Come out, come out wherever you are. The weather is warming and the snow is finally melting, so it’s time to come out to learn and play. This weekend Kidzeum is throwing open its doors with free admission. Inside you will find lots of fun crafts and activities. Cut loose and explore the exhibits, from Active Alex’s toes to the top of his brain, from the Healthy Earth water table to the Winter Wonderland activity center. In store, also, are Valentine’s Day crafts, STEAM programs and resources for Black History Month.

**Diabetes therapeutic shoe clinic**  
Wed., Feb. 16, 10am-2pm. If you have diabetes, you may be entitled to a pair of therapeutic shoes and three pairs of inserts per calendar year. Garth Aakal from George Allen Shoes will explain this Medicare-paid program and discuss the importance of wearing good shoes. You can select a shoe style at the clinic. 

**Send us your events!**

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**Event Dates, Times and Locations**

Send us your events! Deadline: 5pm Fri. Submit online at: www.illinoistimes.com  
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Email: calendar@illinoistimes.com  
Dates, times and locations are subject to last-minute changes, so we suggest calling before attending events.
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE SEVENTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
SANGAMON COUNTY - SPRINGFIELD,
ILLINOIS
QUICKEN LOANS INC.,
PLAINTIFF
vs.
EARNEST R. GRAY; LASHONNA L. GRAY;
DEFENDANTS
NO. 2019CH000400
Judge Ryan Cadigan
Address: 3030 South 3rd Street Spring-
field, IL 62703

NOTICE OF SHERIFF’S SALE OF REAL
ESTATE
PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that
pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure
and Sale entered in the above cause
on November 17, 2021, I, Sheriff of
Sangamon County, Illinois, will on March
15, 2022 at the hour of 9:00 AM at the
Sangamon County Building, 200 S. Ninth
St., Springfield, IL 62701, or in a place
otherwise designated at the time of sale,
County of Sangamon, State of Illinois, sell
at public auction to the highest bidder
for cash, as set forth below, the following
described real estate:
COMMON ADDRESS: 3030 South 3rd
Street, Springfield, IL 62703
P .I.N.: 22-09.0-477-006
The real estate is improved with a single-
family residence.
THE JUDGMENT AMOUNT WAS:
$108,188.46
Sale terms: 25% down by certified funds;
the balance, by certified funds, is due
within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject
property is subject to real estate taxes,
special assessments or special taxes
levied against said real estate and is
subject to all other liens, charges, and
credits that may be applicable.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 7TH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS
UNITED COMMUNITY BANK, an
Illinois banking corporation,
Plaintiff,
vs.
TARA HOLLO, ERIN LANCASTER,
MEGAN LANG, JESSE LANG,
UNKNOWN HEIRS AND LEGATEES
OF PENNY M. LANG, Deceased,
THEODORE J. HARVATIN, SPECIAL
REPRESENTATIVE FOR PENNY M.
LANG, deceased, UNKNOWN OWNERS
AND NONRECORD CLAIMANTS,
Defendants.
No. 2021CH92
NOTICE OF SALE
PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that
pursuant to a judgment of foreclosure
entered by the court on the Complaint for
Foreclosure in the above-entitled cause,
the property hereinafter described or so
much thereof as shall be sufficient to
satisfy said judgment, will be sold to the
highest bidder.
(A) The name, address and telephone
number of the person to contact for infor-
mation regarding the real estate is: United
Community Bank, Attn: Loss Mitigation,
1311 West Jefferson Street, Auburn, IL
62615; Telephone: (217) 438-5467
(B) The common address and other
common description, if any, of the real
estate is: 905 S. Henrietta Street, Springfield,
Illinois 62704
(C) A description of the improvements on
the real estate is: Single family residence.
(D) The real estate may be inspected
prior to sale at the following times: Not
applicable.
(E) The time and place of the sale are:
March 15, 2022 at 9:00 AM in the County
Board Chambers Room on the 2nd Floor
of the Sangamon County Complex, 200 S.
9th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701,
(f) The terms of the sale are: Cash in
hand on day of sale. Plaintiff may credit
bid at the sale. The successful bidder will
receive a Certificate of Purchase following
the sale and a Sheriff’s Deed upon confir-
mation of the sale by the Circuit Court of
Sangamon County, Illinois.

Get Illinois Times delivered to your home or
office mailbox. Subscribe and support at
illinoistimes.com/subscribe
217-753-2226
marketing@illinoistimes.com
March 18-24, 2022
www.illinoistimes.com
offered for sale without any representa-
tion as to quality or quantity of title and
without recourse to Plaintiff and in “as is”
condition.

On the sale being held and the pur-
bearer tendering said bid in certified
funds, a receipt of Sale will be issued
and a Certificate of Sale as required, which
will entitle the purchaser to a Judgment
heretofore entered by the Court. Commonly
known as 1948 East Lawrence Avenue,
Springfield, IL 62703

Upon payment in full of the amount
bid, the purchaser of the unit at the fore-
closure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall
have the duty to pay the proportion share,
if any, of any assessment and taxes, and
other minerals underlying the land which
have been conveyed or reserved under
the terms of the deed in favor of the
mortgagor, or any of his or her successor
mortgagors, or any other person or persons,
if any, situated in Sangamon County, Illinois.

Common area or location of mort-
gage and NONRECORD CLAIMANTS,
SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

The property is improved by a Single Fam-
ily Residential: Single-Family Residence
14-35.0-328-002 and 14-35.0-328-003
Avenue, Springfield, IL 62703
Commonly known as 1948 East Lawrence
Avenue, Springfield, IL 62703

The property is sold subject to
subsequent deeds, if any, and any encum-
brances, easements, and restrictions
of record, and existing leases, if any, any
zoning law; property is sold “WHERE IS, and
with no warran-
ties”, and without any representation as
to quality or quantity of the title and
without recourse to Plaintiff. The sale is fur-
ther subject to confirmation by the Court.
Upon payment in full of the amount
bid, the purchaser shall receive a Certificate
of Sale, which will entitle the purchaser
to a Judgment heretofore entered by the
Court.

NOTICE OF JUDICIAL SALE OF REAL
ESTATE AND ANY INFORMATION
HEREIN CONTAINED IS NOT
INTENDED TO CONSTITUTE A
SALE OR DISPOSAL OF THE
PROPERTY, BUT IS INTENDED TO
BE A NOTICE FOR ALL
INTERESTED PERSONS TO
ATTEND THE FORECLOSURE
SALE, WHICH WILL BE HELD
IN THE SANGAMON COUNTY BOARD
CHAMBERS, 212 W. Washington Avenue,
Springfield, IL 62704 ON TUESDAY,
February 22, 2022, AT 9:00 A.M.

The property is a condominium unit
in the Condominium Property Act, 765
ILCS 605/9(g)(1) and (g)(4). If this property
is a condominium unit, the purchaser
shall pay all assessments which accrued
before he or she acquired title.

The sale is further subject to con-
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shall pay all assessments which accrued
before he or she acquired title.

The sale is further subject to con-
firmation by the Court.
NOTICE is given to claimants of the Estate of MARY P. HEMP, deceased.

Deceased.

In the Matter of the Estate of MARY P. HEMP, deceased.

Dated this 20th day of January, 2022.

Dwight O’Keefe, of 1118 South Sixth Street, Springfield, Illinois 62704, or with the Representative, or both, or on or before August 1, 2022, or within six months from the date of this Notice and any claim not filed within that period is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the Representative and to the attorney within ten days after it has been filed.

Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Any claim not filed within that period is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the Representative and to the attorney within ten days after it has been filed.

February 10-16, 2022  |  Illinois Times  |  39
NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

Pursuant to the statute in such case made and provided, Plaintiff, THE LAND WHICH HAVE BEEN HERETOFORE SPOKEN OF AS "THE NORTH 40 FEET OF THE SOUTH 120 FEET OF THE ESTATE OF MARGARET A. PIKE, Deceased," and the same being the subject of a Judgment of Foreclosure entered by the court on the complaint for foreclosure, now being held and made public notice is hereby given that pursuant to the provisions of the usual sway and authority of the court of record of Sangamon County, Illinois, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, as set forth below, the described real estate, pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure.

The Judgment Amount was $58,326.54.

No. 2019CH02

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to the provisions of the usual sway and authority of the court of record of Sangamon County, Illinois, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, as set forth below, the described real estate:

The judgment amount was $58,326.54.

In the court of record of Sangamon County, Illinois, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, as set forth below, the described real estate:

The judgment amount was $58,326.54.

In the Circuit Court of the Seventh Judicial Circuit, Sangamon County, Illinois, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, as set forth below, the described real estate:

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NOTICE OF SALE STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE COURT OF THE SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COUNTY OF SANGAMON SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS
Plaintiff,
vs.
MARK A. LEHMANN and STATE OF ILLINOIS-DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
Defendants.
CASE NO. 21-CH-100
PROPERTY ADDRESS: 2575 S. COLLEGE SPRINGFIELD, IL 62704
PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to a judgment of the above court, entered in the above entitled cause on January 19, 2022, the following described real estate, to-wit: LOT EIGHTY-ONE (81) EXCEPT THE SOUTH FIFTEEN (15) FEET OF THE WEST FORTY-TWO (42) FEET OF THE "HIGHLANDS", A SUBURBAN SUBDIVISION OF THE NORTH HALF OF SECTION NINE, TOWNSHIP FIFTEEN (15) NORTH, RANGE FIVE (5) WEST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, EXCEPT THE COAL AND OTHER MINERALS UNDERLYING THE SURFACE OF SAID LAND AND ALL BUILDINGS AND EASEMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE ESTATE OF SAID COAL AND MINERALS. SITUATED IN SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS.
Permanent Index Number: 22-09-0-206-019
Commonly known as: 2757 S. College, Springfield, IL 62704 will be offered for sale and sold at public
Circle of Words

Across
1. "The King and I" woman
5. Wife of Zeus
9. Flushed
14. Takes a turn
15. Nape tail
16. Classical mall
17. How some police patrol the streets
19. Pelvis part
20. Like llamas
21. Wages
23. Telegram "period"
25. No gentleman
26. Works on a kakra puzzle
27. Kept tabs on
35. Island garnish
36. Hot spot
37. Sudden raid
38. Plays "Simon Says"
41. Band booster
43. Cut back
44. Atsuta Shrine city
46. Dibs
48. Fits of stock?
49. Foundation
51. Wayside stops
52. Mii
55. Rebel (against)
56. Laity quality
60. Second of a pair
64. Alpine tool
65. Productive one
67. Stock unit
68. Flu symptom
69. It smells
70. Certain drugs
71. Listen and obey
72. "Dig in!"
22. Castaway's clothing
24. Perry Como's "I Loves Mambo"
26. Beside
27. Except
28. San ___, Calif.
30. Grassy plain
31. Hockey's Bobby
32. 180, so to speak
33. Curtain fabric
34. Accomplishments
37. "I__d" city
39. Sentence structures
42. Actor's goal
45. Month before Nissan
63. Basoon, c.g.
66. Bleed

Down
1. Turkish title
2. Twelve, maybe
3. Unlikely class president
4. Put a value on
5. Associates
6. Hilarity abbr.
7. Sushi ingredient
8. Anti-aircraft fire
9. Bit of drizzle
10. "__ That__"
11. "Whatcha__"
12. Dope
13. Thanksgiving dish

No. Native American home
54. Go"<br />
55. "Go"<br />
56. "Bounce back in"
57. Heavy, durable furniture wood
58. Aesop's also ran
59. Cartoon bear
60. "I__d" city (North Carolina's capital)
62. "__ quam vi
d"__
63. Structure
64. Act's goal
48. Men's goal
49. "__ low"
50. Lay low

JoshJosh

by J. Reynolds - No. 726

Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

Sudoku

No. 726

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive.

Difficulty medium

Puzzle answers from this week will appear here next week

Crossword answers from #725
No. 726

Sudoku answers from #725
JoshJosh answers from #725

No. 725

Difficulty hard

Circle of Words

Edited by J. Reynolds - No. 726

JoshJosh

by J. Reynolds - No. 726

Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

Sudoku

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Crossword answers from #725
No. 726

Sudoku answers from #725
JoshJosh answers from #725

No. 725

Difficulty hard
Hayes Event Management

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