

Grownups getting stronger

REGEN

Winter 2023

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Andre Iguodala with his mother, Linda Shanklin of Springfield.
COURTESY LINDA SHANKLIN

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Cover photo by Wagner Photography

REGEN Winter 2023

REGEN stands for **Re**Generation, the magazine for active and creative grownups, members of The ReGen generation. The REGEN is age 50-plus, yet this generation is not just an age but a lifestyle. The REGEN includes people willing to try new adventures, to give back, to reinvent themselves and their communities. They've done it all at least once before, so they like "re-" words: reenergized, resurrected, and yes, retired.

One of Springfield's newest retirees is Andre Iguodala, 39, the Lanphier High School standout who recently finished his stellar NBA career. Iguodala, profiled on p. 18, isn't looking back on his career that included four NBA championships, so much as he is looking forward to helping kids like those at Springfield's Boys and Girls Club, where he spent time growing up. Looking forward is also the key to "Life after death," p. 20, for three Springfield women who reflect on life after losing a husband to death. "You never get over it," one says, "but you just get through it." "The power of purpose," p. 15, is Tim Hahn's reflection on the benefit of "connecting to a calling" for whatever time you have left. Artists do that when they "articulate the Divine within themselves." The Pawnee-based pottery artist Simon Levin, p. 16, demonstrates such inner connection, not only with his own award-winning pottery, but also through his internships and online teaching and mentoring.

There's a lot here for the active 50-plus crowd, the ones we call "Grownups getting stronger." Please send your reactions and suggestions to editor@illinoistimes.com. —Fletcher Farrar, editor

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Members of the Ross and Sheila Hodel family pause for a photo a glacier near Grindelwald, Switzerland, during their most recent multi-generational family vacation. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSS AND SHEILA HODEL

Generations traveling **together**

Giving grandkids the gift of experiences

By Mary Bohlen

Ross and Sheila Hodel started with water parks, graduated to ski trips and national parks and this summer upped their multi-generational family trip game with hiking in Switzerland. They say such trips give them quality time with their children and grandchildren.

They are not alone. According to several travel magazines and travel agents, family vacations with three or

more generations are on the rise. Some say the COVID-19 pandemic spurred the trend to get together in a secluded environment, while others note some families have been doing it for years with annual reunions, camping trips or destination vacations.

"I have clients who started 40 years ago when the grandchildren were young and they still go on cruises

together every year," said Jill Bowen, owner of Springfield Travel Shoppe. She says that once children are financially independent, many parents want to use their money making memories and watching the grandchildren grow up.

"Spending time with kids and grandkids is the most important thing you can do," she added.

The Hodels, longtime Springfield



The Tom and Carol Kerins family in Hawaii, 2022. The family of nine has taken six trips together.
PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM AND CAROL KERINS

residents, agree. Taking multiple generations on trips starting 18 years ago has allowed them to have crucial time with their grandchildren. “We’ve tried to give them experiences rather than material things,” Ross said, noting the trips they plan involve lots of active endeavors. Most also have an educational component.

Sharing experiences over the years has created a special bond among the six grandchildren. “The neatest thing was that one night on the most recent trip the grandkids were sitting around the table and they started reminiscing about past trips,” he said.

Their trips began with water parks when the grandchildren were little, as an opportunity to get away with each other, vacation and catch up. As the

youngest generation grew, the Hodels opted for skiing and then on to national parks – “Whether they wanted to or not,” she said with a laugh.

Their first international trip, to Switzerland, provided an opportunity for the grandchildren to have their eyes opened to the wider world and continued the emphasis on active vacations. “My family roots are in Switzerland and they got to see a little of it,” Ross added.

The Hodels pick the destinations, consult with the younger generations and make most of the arrangements, sometimes starting a year in advance and finalizing the details by the winter holidays before that summer’s trip. That early planning is important, to find a rental to house the whole family and to

plan activities.

“When we started out, we let them decide what they wanted to do (each day), but that didn’t really work out,” Sheila said. “It became better to have a plan or otherwise you have 12 people trying to decide what to do. Now we have a daily schedule and if someone doesn’t want to participate, they can do something else.” For example, some family members like to shop so that also is built into the schedule.

If the destination is in the United States, family members usually fly and rent three cars. They also have breakfasts and dinners together, with different groups responsible for planning meals. The Hodels mostly pay for housing and travel.

For the Switzerland trip, the Hodels



Sheila and Ross Hodel of Springfield take their children and grandchildren on a yearly vacation, including summer 2023, when they traveled to Switzerland. The family enjoys a meal together near the Eiger in Switzerland. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSS AND SHEILA HODEL

relied on a tour company that helped plan various hiking adventures. They were gone 11 days instead of their usual four or five days together.

Planning is key for group discounts

Tom and Carol Kerins of Springfield also have taken three generations on several vacations, starting a dozen years ago. Their trips together include Mexico, Montana, Florida, Hawaii and shorter hops to Chicago and St. Louis during the winter holidays.

One daughter lives in Springfield

but the other is in Arizona so multi-generational trips are a way to get everyone together, especially the three grandchildren, Tom said. The tradition began when one son-in-law won a week in a house in Mexico at a fundraiser. It was big enough for the family of nine so they all got to enjoy it. Tom and Carol celebrated their 50th anniversary with a trip to Disney World, where they had always wanted to take the family.

Like the Hodels, the Kerins' family trips are scheduled around the children's and the grandchildren's time

off from work and school, which means the summer or holidays. Tom and Carol have their adult children make the arrangements and plan activities. Paying for things varies depending on the trip.

"We talk it through so everyone has a say in it," Tom said, and being willing to listen to any concerns about a possible destination is important. Usually the family members all stick together during the trip and eat out so no one has to cook.

The Kerins also took their granddaughter on a high school graduation trip to London and Rome and plan to take the two grandsons wherever they want to go when they graduate. The grandsons sharing a room during the Florida vacation was a highlight for Carol.

"The family trips were all different but all wonderful," she said.

Bowen said she has clients who prefer cruises or all-inclusive resorts in Hawaii, the Caribbean or Mexico because they provide family members different entertainment options. "It's a way for family members to gather for meals perhaps and still go off and do things on their own."

Some people like to bike or hike while others prefer to relax, Bowen said. All-inclusives give that choice. She said 10 to 12 family members seem to be a workable group for multi-generational travel.

She asks families looking at such vacations to first figure out what various members want to do and how much they want to spend.

Other travel experts agree it is important to plan in advance, look for group discounts on airfare and lodging and be considerate of various family members' interests – something the Hodels and Kerins seem to have mastered. □

Mary Bohlen of Springfield writes about travel for ReGen and other publications. Her three-generation family started vacationing together during the COVID-19 pandemic and last summer traveled to Hawaii.

Winter fun **online**

**From home in your pajamas you can exercise,
listen to a lecture, watch jellyfish, meditate**

By Tara McAndrew

If it's too cold to leave your house or your pajamas are glued on, you can still enjoy the season. Exercise, take a class, learn a craft, visit other locales and find new friends through your laptop or cellphone.

While these activities are often better in person, the weather, illness and other conditions can make that difficult. Online activities offer a variety of advantages: they can be free and convenient. "I don't have to leave my house and I can do it in my pajamas or sweats," says retired Springfield physician Gina Kovach about the free January online yoga program she does annually with her daughter and friends through Yoga with Adriene. While Kovach usually walks for exercise, January weather prevents that. "I look forward to the (online yoga)," she says. "It's good for me and a way to connect with my daughter and others."

Online exercise options are as plentiful as snowflakes. Check with your local fitness centers and yoga studios since many offer them. AARP has a variety and gives nonmembers access to some. Search "online exercise classes" to find possibilities.

If arts and crafts are your pleasure, you're in luck. Lisa Whelpley of Chatham, an avid greeting card maker with a home craft space, is hooked on a free, weekly card-making class called Craft Roulette. "I started doing this during the pandemic because I was looking for something to do and wanted to interact with people. I've found a community there and it gives me creative confidence because I hone my skills every week," Whelpley says. She's developed friends around the

world in the group, and every week she learns from others' creative styles. "One thousand people participate each week. It's amazing," she says.

She and her husband, Rodd, a poet, watch poetry readings online and listen to lectures or author talks through University of Illinois Springfield and Chatham Library. Springfield's Lincoln Library has occasional online events, too.

Perhaps you're looking for something quieter. Springfield professor Deborah Brothers has taken a variety of online meditation classes, which can be cheaper and helpful if you can't find time off work to take them in person. "The greatest benefit, besides saving time and money, is that I got to do things I otherwise wouldn't have gotten to do, and with people and teachers



Yoga with Adriene

that were out of state,” she says. “As an autistic person who is not only socially awkward but also has a highly reactive and sensitive sensory system that often makes it difficult to be in public spaces due to hyper senses and overload, it is a blessing,” she adds. Also, online classes can be a great way for beginners to learn a skill, according to Brothers.

Springfield teacher Derry Dalby has visited an aquarium and has watched theater online. Through the Roundhouse Aquarium in California, his class was able to tour the aquarium virtually. “Many of my students are low-income so they would not have an opportunity to do something like that and the closest aquarium to us would be in St. Louis,” he says. The students enjoyed the online tour “very much.”

Through aquariums’ webcams, students of all ages can tour aquariums or watch their inhabitants live online. Some aquariums offering this include the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California, the Georgia Aquarium and the National

Aquarium in Baltimore. The Monterey Bay Aquarium’s webcam provides a live look at their jellyfish. It’s mesmerizing and good for de-stressing after the holidays. You’ll be asleep in minutes between the soothing music and the jellies’ slow rise and fall.

Being far from certain theaters hasn’t prevented Dalby from enjoying shows. He has virtually watched singers such as Barbara Dixon, known as “Broadway Barbara.” Although she’s based on the West Coast, this “gave me an opportunity to see her shows without having to travel,” Dalby says. The same was true of a musical he wanted to see called *Lizzie*, about Lizzie Borden, which was performed in San Francisco.

Online academic or business classes are popular. Participants take them for professional reasons or to get a degree. Gina Kovach took several online classes for work and because she “likes to learn.” She highly recommends Coursera, an online company that has a “ton of online courses in a variety of disciplines.” Many

universities and colleges (including University of Illinois Springfield and Lincoln Land Community College) offer online classes, too.

To find online experiences to fit your interests, search “online cooking classes,” “online aquarium tours,” or “Florida webcams,” for example, or peruse some of these websites:

- Coursera.org
- georgiiaquarium.org
- National Aquarium – www.aqua.org
- The Kennedy Center - <https://www.kennedy-center.org/digitalstage/masterclass.com>
- Smithsonian – si.edu/learn
- Craft Roulette – craftroulette.live
- yogawithadriene.com
- AARP - <https://local.aarp.org/virtual-community-center/>
- America’s Test Kitchen cooking school – onlinecookingschool.com
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Thursday June 27
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Grandpa plays **baseball**

Ron Michaelson, 81: “You don’t stop playing because you get old. You get old because you stop playing.”

By Karen Ackerman Witter

Ron Michaelson had a long and distinguished career in Illinois state government, first moving to Springfield to work for Gov. Richard Ogilvie. He still resides in Springfield and has always been physically active. Michaelson loves baseball. He started in Little League when he was eight and is still playing at 81. He competes in the Roy Hobbs Baseball World Series in Ft. Myers, Florida, in the 75-and-over division. He adheres to the saying, “You don’t stop playing because you get old – you get old because you stop playing.”

Michaelson was catcher and captain of his Maine Township High School baseball team in Des Plaines, which won the state championship. He played at Wheaton College and was inducted into its Hall of Fame. There were no local post-collegiate baseball leagues when Michaelson came to Springfield, so he switched to softball. He played fast pitch, then slow pitch and lots of golf. Michaelson got back into playing real baseball 17 years ago, when the Springfield High School athletic director enticed him to play in the Roy Hobbs Baseball World Series in the 60-and-over division.

Roy Hobbs Baseball is an amateur league for those 35 and over, with multiple age divisions. It is named for the fictional character in the movie *The Natural*. A signature event is the annual World Series, where over 200 teams from around the world play at the Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins spring training facilities in Florida. Initially Michaelson wasn’t that enthused, but in 2005, four from Springfield joined a team mostly



Ron Michaelson, with grandkids, Jack and Abby, on the occasion of his 2019 induction into the Roy Hobbs Baseball Hall of fame.

from the Chicago suburbs and played in the tournament. Michaelson still remembers the initial team meeting where the guys from the burbs had low expectations for the downstaters. "Without the four of us, they would have been awful," said Michaelson, who was voted team MVP. From then on, he was hooked.

Over the years, the team gradually became predominantly Springfield players. Michaelson is player/manager for the team, now called the Avengers. There are 15 members, including some from other states. Six are 80 or older. Springfield-area teammates are Jim Auth, Dick Cordier, Kris Glintborg, Jerry Johnson, Mike Jurgens, Rick Rakowski, Bob Sagle, Larry Sample and Paul Smith. They compete against many teams that play in leagues year-round. That opportunity doesn't exist in Springfield. The Avengers begin practicing around Labor Day.

The tournament lasts five weeks each October-November, with the oldest division playing last. The Avengers took third place in their division this year. Michaelson caught five games and pitched the sixth. He, along with more than 40 others, played in an 80s-and-up exhibition game. Next year there will likely be a new 80-and-older division.

There are some rule adjustments for those over 70. They play seven innings. There are no tag plays at home. A hit into the outfield earns an automatic first base. They can steal third base but not second, since catchers have a harder time making that throw to second base. That's likely not the case for Michaelson, however, since he's been a catcher since the 1950s. He catches, pitches and plays third base for the Avengers. All players use wooden bats. Michaelson is still going strong despite having his knees replaced in 2007 and 2008. "Every year, the bases seem longer and the throw to second seems longer," jokes Michaelson.

The team won the championship three times, and Michaelson was inducted into the Roy Hobbs Baseball Hall of Fame in 2019. His teammates call him the heart and soul of the

Avengers and say he has both a high IQ and a high EQ (emotional quotient).

In addition to sports, politics (which some call a blood sport) has also been a constant in Michaelson's life. He has a master's degree in political science from Northwestern University and a Ph.D. in political science from Southern Illinois University. He worked for Richard Ogilvie when Ogilvie was president of the Cook County Board and then moved to Springfield to work for Governor Ogilvie (1969-1973).

Michaelson also became an adjunct professor at Sangamon State University

(SSU) in 1970, teaching politics and state government at night. After Ogilvie lost reelection, Michaelson taught full time until becoming the first executive director of the State Board of Elections in 1974. He served in that position for 29 years until his retirement in 2003. Throughout his career, he continued to teach evening classes at SSU and then University of Illinois Springfield, enlightening many students about the intricacies and importance of elections, state government and politics.

After retiring from the State Board of Elections, he taught full time at UIS



Michaelson, right, worked for Richard Ogilvie when Ogilvie was president of the Cook County Board. Michaelson moved to Springfield to work for Ogilvie during his term as governor, 1969-1973.

for five years and then part time until he “retired for good” about four years ago. Now he continues to lend his expertise while wintering in Arizona. He volunteers at the University of Arizona, where he teaches an adult learning class. Last year his class reviewed the 2020 national election and next spring will focus on the 2024 presidential and congressional races. While wintering in Arizona, he also enjoys attending many baseball spring training games. He is a lifelong Cubs fan.

“You have to have balance in your life,” says Michaelson. Having a successful career in government while continuing to teach and enjoy sports provided balance for Michaelson. In addition to playing baseball, he also officiated more than 1,700 high school and small college basketball games over 37 years. In recognition, he was inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. He says all this was possible because he had a great staff at the State Board of Elections, and the board recognized that Michaelson’s teaching and officiating reflected well on the organization.

Michaelson has been married to his wife, Jan, for 56 years. They have two children and five grandchildren. Ron calls Jan his best friend. She’s very supportive but has never gone to the Roy Hobbs World Series, saying all the men do is eat, sleep and play baseball.

Why does he continue to play? “I love baseball,” Michaelson says. “I’ve played it all my life. I’m blessed with decent ability and good health and I don’t take that for granted. It is so much fun.” □

Karen Ackerman Witter has often heard the story that her husband’s long lobbying career was a result of attending Ron Michaelson’s class at SSU in 1973 about gubernatorial politics. Bob Cook, CEO of the Illinois Association of Realtors, was a guest speaker. Michaelson introduced Randy to Cook, which led to Randy’s 48-year lobbying career and formation of the Cook-Witter, Inc. lobbying firm.



Ron and Jan Michaelson in Porto, Portugal.



Michaelson has been playing catcher since the 1950s. “Every year the throw to second seems longer,” he jokes. PHOTO BY WAGNER PHOTOGRAPHY

The power of purpose

For longer, better life, connect to a calling

By Tim Hahn

A recent scientific study published in *Preventive Medicine* showed a link between individuals who felt a greater sense of purpose in their lives with a decreased mortality rate, by about 20% in some cases. The study used around 13,000 Americans who were 50 years and older who were studied for two years with an eight-year follow-up period. The lower risks stemmed from less cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline, and lower rates of depression, anxiety and overall stress. This is great news, not only for living longer, but for making the time we do have more fulfilling.

While researching this topic I came across two words that have special meaning in reference to life purpose and fulfillment. The first is *ikigai*, a Japanese term and concept that means “a life well lived.” This refers to not just pursuing transitory pleasure. It also means devoting oneself to mastery of activities that both resonate with one’s own deep purpose and benefit society. The concept leads to the most lasting forms of happiness. It may explain why life expectancy in Japan is about seven years longer than in the United States.

The second word is *telos*, of ancient Greek origin, referring to the kind of purpose that offers, not simply a sense of aim, but the potential for fulfillment and for fully developing one’s true nature.

So life purpose is not just trying to live longer for sake of living longer, but living with deeper connection for greater fulfillment and lasting contribution in the time we have on earth. Purpose is not just trying to find something to head towards or simply being a goal-oriented person. Purpose is being connected to a calling that stems from within. Being more connected to a deep-rooted purpose allows greater capacity to respond to unexpected events, and the spaciousness to embody compassion, patience and wisdom.

Pitfalls in the way of looking for purpose come from looking in all the wrong places and getting lost. There is an idea that in

childhood there are golden moments when our purpose is revealed to us. But most of us confuse someone else’s purpose as our own. We are not encouraged by others or shown authentic examples of those living a life well lived. It can be easy to judge our purpose based on society’s rules of success. Money, power and fame all point to being in line with the world’s purpose. Yet all we need to do is look at those who have these things and see their unhappiness. Inversely, we can look at those who seem to have found their purpose, and are fulfilled beyond need, without money, power or fame.

From the world’s great wisdom teachings we learn that the Divine created us and is within us and with us at all times. Maybe our purpose is to awaken and realize the truth of our being and allow the natural and sponta-

neous unfolding of life to happen through us. In this way of understanding, we can only fail to recognize our true nature and therefore fail to fully inhabit our natural state. By allowing ourselves to follow our calling, we not only contribute to society, but we also become examples to others. Artisans are a great example to us when they follow the true inner calling by creating and articulating the Divine within themselves that touches that likeness within ourselves. One of the great poets, Rumi, said this: “Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray.” □

Tim Hahn and his wife, Molly, have been running CrossFit Instinct in Springfield since 2010. They feel blessed and fulfilled to be able to support people physically, mentally and spiritually.



Ikigai is a Japanese concept that means “a life well lived.”

This artist **harnesses** earth, wind, fire and water

Simon Levin, Pawnee studio potter, is also a writer, “firefighter,” “dirt burner,” and Fulbright Scholar

By Jean Campbell

Above are the words pottery artist Simon Levin uses to describe himself professionally on his Instagram account. He could easily add Innovator, Clay Lover, Mentor, Teacher, Award Winner and Wood-Firing Kiln Builder.

Levin, 55, is a highly skilled and gifted creator of one-of-a-kind utilitarian pottery, including plates, cups, bowls, vases and jars. He explains that pottery is a beautiful art form, but it can also be functional and part of everyday life.

Known around the world, he became part of the central Illinois arts community in 2018 when his wife, Reverend Susan Phillips, accepted the position of pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Springfield. They moved from rural Wisconsin, where he founded Mill Creek Pottery in 1999, to Pawnee, where he established his second Mill Creek Pottery location. His artwork is currently displayed at the inaugural exhibition, *Shadow and Light*, at the New Mexico Museum of Art Viadom Contemporary in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The exhibition, which continues through April 2024, features pieces from 30 artists. “It is a huge honor to be included in this exhibition,” Levin said. “It was also a joy to collaborate on a larger project with Native Futurist Virgil Ortiz.”

Levin became hooked on pottery in 1990 during a college ceramics class in his senior year. It quickly became his career choice. He went on to earn a master of fine arts degree from the University of Iowa in 1998.

In the early 1990s, Levin experienced working with wood-fired kilns. He became intrigued by the process, and it

became his life’s work.

“I was drawn to wood firing by the very primal human connection we have with earth and fire,” he says. “I fell in love with the river of dancing flames in a wood-burning kiln. The flames that touch the pottery are etched into the surface and falling ashes create a natural glaze. No two pieces look exactly alike.”

He has built three wood-fired kilns for his own use: an ancient Korean-style kiln called an anagama, a contemporary cross-draft kiln and a third, at his home in Illinois, based on the “train kiln” model designed by John Nealy, a renowned professor of art in ceramics at Utah State University. Many colleges and universities across the country and internationally



Simon Levin with his current apprentice, Elin Hughes, who came from her home in Wales to study wood-fired pottery.



The Cohorts.Art group after firing the train kiln. Left to right: Kate Marotz, Shirley Stephens, Stephen Corner, Simon Levin, Rekha Srinivasan and Signe Klove.



Wood-fired mugs by Simon Levin with the kiln shed in the background.

have sought out Levin to build kilns for their institutions.

The train kiln is a massive structure made of brick and is so named because it resembles a traditional steam locomotive. At one end of the kiln is a small tower where the wood is stoked. The chamber in the center of the kiln, where pottery is loaded, is large enough to climb into and has space for about 300 pieces. The chamber opening is closed with bricks before the firing begins. Flames pass through the top of the firebox in a downward direction toward the pottery. The air, smoke and ash are drawn across the pottery and up through a chimney at the other end of the kiln.

Levin usually fires his train kiln four times a year. "It is a weeklong labor of love," he says. "It takes a day to meticulously load the pottery. The pottery is fired for 52 hours at a temperature that rises to 2,400 degrees F. It requires constant monitoring of the temperature,

oxygen level and need for additional wood. The pottery cools over the next three days, which is followed by hand sanding each piece.”

Levin is assisted in the firings by the apprentices he teaches. He launched the apprenticeship program in 2004 to grow and expand pottery artistry. “I provide the facilities, materials, opportunities and guidance,” he explains. “To date, I have had the pleasure of helping 24 burgeoning artists learn, experiment and find their own artistic voices.”

Levin travels extensively to hone his craft, collaborate with other artists and share his technique. He also lectures, writes articles and hosts a video series on the Ceramics Arts Network (<https://ceramicartsnetwork.org/claylicks/claylicks-exclusives/talking-clay>). In 2013, he received a Senior Fulbright Scholar award giving him the opportunity to become a visiting artist and researcher at Tainan National University of the Arts in Taiwan, where he explored and tested unique local clays.

In 2020, Levin was inspired to start a small-batch mentorship program he named Clay Cohorts. “The idea came to me during the pandemic when everything was moving to online learning,” he says. “Over a year’s time, we meet online as individuals and as a group to move the conversation, ideas and the work to the next level. At the end of the coursework, we gather for a weeklong wood-fire workshop using my train kiln. That is followed by a gallery exhibition. This program is for the intrinsically motivated student who has access to studio space but is hungry for feedback and mentoring.”

In 2021, with the success of Clay Cohorts, Levin brought in a program



Cohorts.Art member Rekha Srinivasan stokes the train kiln with wood during a Cohorts.Art Workshop

manager and added two more mentors. He also renamed the program to Cohorts. Art to offer mentorship opportunities to those in other art disciplines. He currently has five mentors working with him; next year the program will grow to seven mentors working with 40 students.

With the growth and reach of Cohorts. Art, the program was recognized by *Ceramic Arts Yearbook* as the 2024 Ceramic Project/Artist of the Year. Read the article at <https://ceramicartsnetwork.org/pottery-making-illustrated/pottery-making-illustrated-issue/ceramic-arts-yearbook>

Levin sums up his career saying, “It’s been rewarding to be engaged in this beautiful process. I feel part of a long history of makers, advancing the art of pottery and providing guidance to other artists. I’m excited to see what comes next.” □

Jean Campbell is a Springfield freelance writer who is always learning through her writing.

Where to find Levin’s pottery

Levin has an online gallery at SimonLevin.com. In November, he hosted an open house and sale of pottery fired in October at his Pawnee facility. It was the first such sale in four years and drew an interested crowd, including some international visitors. He also exhibits and sells his pottery at Akar Gallery in Iowa City, Iowa, and Good Earth Pottery in Bellingham, Washington. Levin can be reached at simonlevin@gmail.com or @woodfire on Instagram.

If I could be like **Dre**

We could all use more of the Iguodala effect

By Nicole Florence

Like many of you, for Michael Jordan I drank Gatorade to “be like Mike.” I would do anything to attain his superhuman abilities. But realistically, few will ever experience the heights that professional athletes reach – physically, financially and socially. However, if given a chance to truly elevate one’s self, maybe we’d like to attain what is in Andre Iguodala’s cup. It’s a drink that doesn’t enhance our physical abilities. Few will ever experience being the NBA MVP and four NBA championships. The more profound effect, which we may desire, is how Andre has and continues to elevate himself and those around him. This is the Iguodala effect.

As a seventh-grader in Springfield, Andre experienced racial bias firsthand. As a tall, athletic black student being questioned for walking into an honors class is a moment he recalls vividly. He worked hard in that class and received an A. The class and the teacher became his favorites. A moment that could have fostered resentment was one that built resilience. It was motivation to erase any doubts in the teacher’s mind about his intelligence. It is a moment he still relies on, because one must know “when to let someone sit in their ignorance or when to properly address them and how they are interacting with me.” It is a lesson he still uses when dealing with teams, owners, and now in the board room. It’s a lesson his junior high teacher likely also learned.

The energy shift in teammates and spectators as Iguodala would enter the game from the bench was visible and palpable. Being the sixth man would require him to start on the bench, giving up a role as a premier player. “The gift of sacrifice was not an easy one,” Andre explains. “We as humans do not like to sacrifice.” Yet it was what was asked of him, to do what would be best for the team.



Andre Iguodala, 39, retired in October after 19 seasons with the NBA. His memoir, *The Sixth Man*, was published in 2019.

Andre would need to buy into this concept, as it could negatively impact him, mentally as well as financially. He acknowledges, “It was hard to buy into, but it was natural as well.” Making this sacrifice, to become the sixth man, catapulted him to be an even more impactful player. Andre recalls it being “probably the greatest outcome of my career.” This became another elevating moment for him, another lesson for all of us to learn.

While younger Andre may have dreamt about winning championship rings, the mature and now retired Andre has a vision of “helping to build the next generation of forward-thinking individuals.” Andre understands the impact of youth development as he experienced firsthand

during his tenure at Springfield’s Boys and Girls Club. Exposed to kids from diverse and various socioeconomic backgrounds, he learned how to take constructive criticism while he learned the art of conflict resolution. These are skills he calls “street smarts.” They are qualities he uses presently to navigate boardrooms and business deals. The Boys and Girls Club is also where he saw the need to inspire and support youth in marginalized communities.

His current mission to improve the representation of disadvantaged youth within the tech business world has become a passion for him. His jersey during the pandemic bubble games read “Group Economics.” The concept is to build sustainable economic businesses and

partnerships to elevate these communities.

Andre Iguodala is very intentional about decisions made in his name. They must be impactful and not self-serving. He and his mom, Linda Shanklin of Springfield, continue to advocate for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Illinois. CEO Tiffany Mathis-Posey says their support has elevated services to 22 locations, which serve on average 2,200 kids daily. Tiffany says that these two understand that “our youth are our most precious asset.” Having a safe space for her children was a big deal for Linda as a working mother. She currently serves on the board of directors of what has become the second largest non-metro club in the state of Illinois. This is the result of humble work, along with much more effort behind the scenes.

Andre assigns his direct success to the strength and sacrifice of his mother and grandmother. They built a foundation on “being a good person through God and doing right by others,” Linda explains. These matriarchs helped the brothers

understand who they were as black men in society. They impressed upon Andre and his brother, Frank Jr., early on to take care of business at school and “that nobody outside the house better tell me their business,” says Linda firmly. Being accountable was a must. The sense of agency cultivated was a strong force in Andre’s work on and off the court. That mindset continues as Andre has been elevated to be acting executive director of the National Basketball Players Association.

To Andre, faith is everything, though he doesn’t talk about it much in relation to his life. Andre holds it close to himself. Being in God’s word daily and living it is his form of discipleship. His mom is especially proud of his spiritual legacy and of him as a father. His legacy being how he operates, and impacts others, which is more important than any material legacy. Andre’s humility in relation to his accomplishments is exemplary, as is his spiritually led work off the court. He reminds us of Phillipians 2:3 which reads, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or

conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

We all know Andre Iguodala’s accolades on the court. Let us also celebrate how he has elevated himself beyond the game. Teaching us that good guys do win. The faithful do flourish. Showing us that not putting yourself first – even being the sixth man – can get you farther. When asked about a future in coaching, he speaks of having ambitions of being a general manager or owner. He responds passionately about books read and completed business deals more than about past statistics. He speaks quietly and unselfishly about serving his community. That’s the drink I’d like to drink. One that humbly elevates oneself beyond all expectations, all while taking us along for the ride.

Like Dre. If I could be like Dre. □

Nicole Florence of Springfield is co-director of Memorial Wellness Center. She is exploring life outside of medicine as a documentarian and a writer.



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Life after death

Three widows describe what it's like, now that their husbands are gone

By Nicole Florence

Many of us choose to live the rest of our lives alongside another. Two lives intricately and intimately woven together into a fabric of family, hopes and dreams. But what happens when one dies before the other? What happens to the one left behind to grieve not only the loss of their love, but also the loss of the life for which they had hoped? What is life after death like for the widow? And why does that word "widow" have such negative connotations for a person already struck with loss and loneliness?

I was privileged to sit down and talk with three Springfield women who are widows. Each lost her spouse to cancer and had a sense of time prior to the loss of their husbands. They were able to have conversations about what was impending. Every attempt was made to be prepared.

Sharon met her husband through work at the Statehouse and recalls their first meeting. Her late husband was a jokester. He would later tell the grandkids that he met her while in divinity school and she was a go-go dancer. What made their relationship special for her was how he seemed to know what she needed even before she did. It's been over 15 years since he passed and she says, "You never get over it, but you just get through it." Her faith is reassuring, and it comforts her to believe that she will be with him again. Sharon has created a community of friends in faith, and has attended grief groups, which were helpful for her in the earlier years. Her family continues certain traditions and they keep his memory alive with stories and mementos. In her eyes, there is no wrong or right way to grieve. Each person may have their



Dara Matson of Springfield says she no longer grieves her husband's loss, because she is "celebrating his life rather than mourning his death."

own timeline. Her grief comes from knowing that he was the only person who wholeheartedly loved her, she says, and she simply was just not done loving him yet.

Paula met her husband in a bar in the 1950s when she was with girlfriends. He asked her to dance and that was it. That moment started an evolving relationship that resulted in decades of marriage, kids and grandkids. It is hard for her to put into words how much she misses him, but

she especially misses him at gatherings of family or friends. She keeps her grief close to her heart at times, so as to not burden her family. Yet she is always eager to share a story of their life together. She misses his tinkering and projects around the house which sometimes appeared to be full of mistakes. These imperfections in his work remain, and they give her a smile. She leans on her friends in difficult times when needed. There can be some sad and difficult days, but she is forever

grateful for the good memories. Times with her grandkids and great grandkids bring her the most joy. She feels the best way to honor him is through laughter and stories, but mostly by continuing to live her life as best she can.

Dara also met her husband while with a group of friends as they ended up at Baur's restaurant during a late night out. Their relationship over the years was filled with laughter with a side of sarcasm, she recalls. She always just felt "giddy" when he was around. They built a great life together, along with two daughters. When he was diagnosed with colon cancer, she was the take-charge spouse, so they really didn't have many conversations about what to do if or when something would happen. There seemed to be an understanding that she would and could just handle it. Alan's illness over the years took a toll on him physically, yet he kept his humor. Laughing during those difficult times was how they all got through, and laughter is still a large part of Dara's grief process. She talks to Alan every day. She literally talks to him daily as she keeps a small

“Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning to dance in the rain.”

urn of ashes with her at all times. As we talked, Dara even posed the question that maybe she doesn't grieve enough by most standards. She says she doesn't grieve his loss because she is “celebrating his life rather than mourning his death.” If Alan had to stop living, it was important for Dara not to do the same. She doesn't mind being alone, but there are times she

feels forgotten, because most of their social activities were centered on being a couple. She finds joy in her adult daughters and her doggies. She lives by the credo that “Life isn't waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain.” Dara knows that Alan is now dancing and free of the physical burden of his cancer. Having that thought and image is itself worth a celebration, not tears.

Certainly there are differences in being widowed suddenly, versus being prepared by a known illness. Also there may be differences in how men mourn the loss of their loved ones. What I gather from these conversations is that there is a delicate balance between the joys of a life lived and the daily sorrow of a love lost. A rush of memories can surge through at any moment to flood the heart and soul. Reminiscing keeps your loved one alive. To not speak of them dampens the fire of their legacy. There is not a one-size-fits-all on how to grieve moment by moment and day by day. It is not for the rest of us to tell a widow what she should or shouldn't be doing. What friends *should* do is be patient and kind. And we *should* consider taking the time to ask her to tell us a story, or two. □



Dara Matson and her late husband, Alan Chase.

Nicole Florence of Springfield is a writer and a medical doctor.

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By Daron Walker

See what's happening near you

As events may be canceled or rescheduled at the last moment, please first check with the host or venue when making plans to attend an event.

ONGOING

Jacksonville Festival of Lights

Through-Dec. 31, 5-9pm. This magnificent drive-thru experience will be the festive highlight of the holiday season. Food pantry donations accepted. \$10 per car. Morgan County Fairgrounds, Jacksonville, 110 N. Westgate, 217-245-5119.

Brown Bag Concert Series

Wednesdays, 12:15-12:45pm. Through Dec. 27. Enjoy a free concert during the lunch hour. Bring your own lunch or purchase a brown bag lunch for \$5. Free. First Presbyterian Church, 321 S. Seventh St., 217-528-4311.

Senior Crafty Creations

First Wednesday of every month, 10:30-11:30am. Through March 6. A series of casual craft meetups for seniors on the first Wednesday of each month. Connect, create and relax with other people in an easygoing environment. All supplies provided. To help with supplies, consider donating \$5 per session. Free. Ball-Chatham Senior Center, Chatham, 111 W. Mulberry St., 217-483-2713.

Holiday Zoo Lights

Thursday through Sunday, 5-9pm through Dec. 17, then daily through Dec. 23. Take a

stroll through the zoo and enjoy thousands of lights and themed lighted displays, stopping at the photo opportunities for your holiday pics. Enjoy the Zoo Choo Express hot chocolate bar or roast a marshmallow over the fire pit. Henson Robinson Zoo, 1100 E. Lake Shore Dr., 217-585-1821.

Holiday Tours

Experience the beautiful holiday decorations at the Illinois Governor's Mansion with a 30-minute tour. eventbrite.com. Free. Illinois Governor's Mansion, 410 E. Jackson St., 217-210-1020.

Winter Nights at the Museum

Wednesdays, Saturdays, 4-7pm. Through Dec. 23. The museum is joining in the Holiday Walks with dance selections from *The Nutcracker* by the Copper Coin Ballet Company, and winter-themed arts and crafts for kids in the Winter Wonder Workshop. In Lincoln's Cafe. presidentlincoln.illinois.gov. Free. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, 212 N. Sixth St., 217-558-8844.

Winter Holiday Floral Show

Dec. 2-20. Monday-Friday 12-4pm, Saturday and Sunday 12-5pm. Enjoy over 500 poinsettias nestled among the decorated fresh evergreens and lush tropical foliage. Free. Washington Park Botanical Garden, 1740 W. Fayette Ave., 217-546-4116.

Giving Tree Fundraiser

Friday, Nov. 24 through Sunday, Dec. 31. Help animals at the Animal Protective League of Springfield by visiting participating businesses and selecting an ornament off a displayed tree. Each ornament represents an item needed by the APL. Buy the item and place it in the donation bin at the business or bring it to the APL. See the website for a list of businesses. apl-shelter.org. Animal Protective League, 1001 Taintor Road, 217-544-7387.

"Portraits"

Fridays, 12-6pm. Through Dec. 29. See a display of the exceptional portrait photography by Zach Adams. Also find artist-made gift items for the holidays. pharmacygallery.com. Free. The Pharmacy Gallery and Art Space, 623 E. Adams St., 217-622-7903.

DECEMBER

Holiday Pops in the Heartland

Fri., Dec. 15, 7:30pm. Presented by the Illinois Symphony Orchestra and led by one of four distinguished guest conductors vying to become the ISO's next music director. Wonderful entertainment for the holiday season. uispac.com. \$22-\$66. Students \$10. UIS Performing Arts Center, One University Plaza, 217-206-6160.

Dual Piano Christmas

Dec. 15-16, 7pm and Sun., Dec. 17, 2pm. Damien Kaplan and Mark Gifford, a duo that has been called "Improvisational and strategically comedic," are back for more mischief and music. hcfta.org. \$18-\$20. Hoogland Center for the Arts LRS Theatre 1, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

1850s Community Carol Sing

Sat., Dec. 16, 6-7:30pm. Travel back in time to the 1850s this Christmas season, and join Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln for special music, worship and a carol sing. The Lincolns will greet visitors, and everyone is invited to attend in period costumes. lincolnschurch.org. First Presbyterian Church, 321 S. Seventh St., 217-528-4311.

Christmas Charity Concert

Sat., Dec. 16, 7-8:15pm. Ring in the holiday season with special guest performers. Featuring the cast of *Holiday Inn*, radio personality Jim Leach, the 2023 Miss Illinois

Festival Queen, the Rochester High School cast of *Back To The 80's* and many more local artists. Donations welcome. Third Presbyterian Church, 1030 N. Seventh St., 217-528-0457.

Wreaths Across America

Sat., Dec. 16, 11-12am. A part of wreath-laying ceremonies conducted across the country at the same time as the ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. Wreaths Across America is a nonprofit organization supported by volunteers and wreath sponsors. This year's theme is "Serve and Succeed." Free to attend. Camp Butler National Cemetery, 5063 Camp Butler Rd, 217-492-4070.

The Office Christmas Party

Sat., Dec. 16, 6:30pm. The Office Christmas Party for All. Includes hors d'oeuvres, ugly sweater contest, games, photo booth, pictures with Santa, food truck, white elephant gift exchange and more. Launch event of The Culture Experience LLC. Partygoers must register at thecultureexperience.com.

Christmas Classics

Dec. 15-16, 7pm. Bring the whole family for these timeless classics. Friday showing *It's a*

Wonderful Life and Saturday showing Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*. \$10 at the door or \$5 with a food bank donation. Doors and bar open at 6pm. The Legacy Theatre, 101 E. Lawrence, 800-838-3006.

Abbey Road's Christmas with the Beatles

Sun., Dec. 17, 7-9pm. This Beatles tribute act gives attention to every detail of the iconic band's performance - Liverpoolian dialects, vintage instruments and spot-on costumes. Then they present the top hits of the Beatles along with some great holiday tunes. uispac.com. \$28.50-\$78.50. UIS Performing Arts Center, One University Plaza, 217-206-6160.

Candle-lighting Service

Sun., Dec. 17, 6-7pm. Reawaken the Christ light within. Music, singing and fellowship. unityofspringfieldil.org. Donations accepted. Unity of Springfield, 417 Cordelia, 217-523-5897.

The Prophecy Show

Thu., Dec. 21, 7:30pm. A tribute to the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. This St. Louis powerhouse, performing in the style of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, will bring its signature and highly-energized rock

opera back to create an extravagant holiday musical production. uispac.com. \$39-\$85. UIS Performing Arts Center, One University Plaza, 217-206-6160.

Treat Tree Workshop

Thu., Dec. 21, 9-11am. Get messy and make wildlife-friendly ornaments for your trees. Participants ages 5-9 will make different kinds of edibles out of birdseed, spices and fruits. springfieldparks.org. \$35-\$40. Washington Park Botanical Garden, 1740 W. Fayette Ave., 217-546-4116.

Sinatra and Friends Christmas Show

Fri., Dec. 22, 7pm and Sat., Dec. 23, 2pm. Starring Robbie Howard, a world-renowned impersonator and tribute artist. Hear Dean Martin, Randy Travis, Andy Williams, Burl Ives and more. Students \$28, adults \$32 and seniors \$30. hcfta.org. Hoogland Center for the Arts, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Christmas at West Side

Fri., Dec. 22, 5pm and 7pm, Sat. and Sun., Dec. 23 and 24, 1pm, 3pm and 5pm. A starting point for people to discover how much the birth of Jesus matters for them. West Side Christian Church, 2850 Cider Mill Lane, 793-2800.

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Sat., Dec. 23, 7-8pm and Sun., Dec. 24, 11am-12pm, 1-2pm, 3-4pm. See different pictures in different seasons of our life. This holiday season consider the different frames for Christmas and share the most wonderful time of the year. Children's programming both days for kids up to fifth grade. ASL interpreter provided at Saturday's 11am program. myhope.church. Hope Church, 3000 Lenhart Road, 217-787-1446.

Christmas Eve Service

Sun., Dec. 24, 5pm. First Presbyterian Church, 321 S. Seventh St., 217-528-4311.

New Year's Eve Masquerade Party

Fri., Dec. 29, 11:15am. Sparkling juice, appetizers, masquerade mask, and live music by Curt Smith. centrallseniors.org. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-528-4035.

First Night Springfield

Sun., Dec. 31. An annual celebration of the arts with live music, dance and art exhibits at various downtown venues. A family-friendly, handicapped-accessible and affordable event. Snacks available for purchase. \$20,

children \$5. Hosted by the Springfield Area Arts Council. Downtown Springfield, Downtown, 217-752-1723.

JANUARY

Healing Crystal Bowls

Mon., Jan. 1, 6-8pm. relax into their vision of what you would like to create in the new year, and then allow the thoughts to surround you as you listen to the lovely crystal bowl vibrations. \$25 suggested donation. Unity of Springfield, 417 Cordelia St., 217-523-5897.

Live string quartet performance

Sat., Jan. 6, 1pm, Sat., Jan. 13, 1pm and Mon., Jan. 15, 1pm. Musicians will perform pieces written by Randy Erwin in the Illinois Gallery while visitors explore the "Here I Have Lived" exhibition. presidentlincoln.illinois.gov. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, 212 N. Sixth St., 217-558-8844.

Mystery Movie Monday

Sat., Jan. 6, 7pm. You won't know the title of the film until the red velvet curtain opens on the grand screen. Movies from across the spectrum of genres will be shown - comedy, drama, suspense, musical, romance, western

-everything but horror. Free popcorn. atthelegacy.com. The Legacy Theatre, 101 E. Lawrence, 800-838-3006.

The Snow Queen

Sun., Jan. 7, 1-2, 3-4pm. A contemporary retelling of the story that inspired *Frozen*. Sisters, divided by an eternal winter, each set out on wondrous adventures filled with self-discovery, familiar frozen friends and the true meaning of love. Featuring the students of Dance Arts Studio. hcfta.org. \$15. Children under age 6 \$5. Hoogland Center for the Arts LRS Theatre 1, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Springfield's Original Bridal Show

Sun., Jan. 7, 11am-3pm. Featuring premiere vendors. Pre-registration for brides is now open. Sponsored by Capitol Radio Group, Savvi Formalwear and Radio Pro DJ's. Free. Crowne Plaza Springfield, 3000 S. Dirksen Pkwy., 217-529-7777.

AARP Tax Aid

Jan. 8-9, 10am-2pm, Tue., Jan. 16, 10am-2pm, Jan. 22-23, 10am-2pm and Jan. 29-30, 10am-2pm. AARP tax aid volunteers will be at Senior Services of Central Illinois. Stop by on the open dates and times to schedule



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your tax aid appointment. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-528-4035.

Harlem Globetrotters 2024 World Tour

Wed., Jan. 10, 7pm. Watch as the Globetrotters go head-to-head against the Washington Generals, showcasing their amazing basketball skills and outrageous athleticism with a non-stop good time. boscenter.com. \$30-\$296. BOS Center, 1 Convention Center Plaza, 800-745-3000.

Nash

Wed., Jan. 10, 1-1:30pm. Visit with the pet therapy team, Christie and Nash. centralilsenior.org. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-503-4643.

Honoring & Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King

Fri., Jan. 12, 12:15-1pm. With speaker Ward 5 Alderwoman, Lakeisha Purchase. centralilsenior.org. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-528-4035.

Merrily We Roll Along

Jan. 12-13, 7:30pm, Sun., Jan. 14, 2pm, Jan. 19-20, 7:30pm and Sun., Jan. 21, 2pm. An autobiographical(ish) story by the late

Steven Sondheim that tells, in reverse, the complicated 20-year friendship of Franklin, Charles, and Mary. hcfta.org. \$22. Hoogland Center for the Arts LRS Theatre 1, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Nightmare at the Hot Mess Hair Salon

Sat., Jan. 13. Audition for one of the over-the-top caricatures of early 2000s stereotypes for this zany murder-mystery comedy written and directed by Courtney Wick. Show dates are March 15-17 and March 22-24. Visit the Springfield Theatre Centre website for more info. springfieldtheatrecentre.com. Hoogland Center for the Arts, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Kiwanis Kids Bash

Sat., Jan. 13, 10am-2pm. Free event with fun activities including, bike giveaways, bounce houses, face painting, soccer darts, inflatable archery and more. Free haircuts from The Barbershop and free food. Salvation Army, 1600 Clear Lake, 217-789-4653.

White Stone Ceremony

Sun., Jan. 14, 10-11am. Celebrate new beginnings with an intention for the year

ahead. love offering. Unity of Springfield, 417 Cordelia, 217-523-5897.

Community Blood Drive

Mon., Jan. 15, 10am-2pm. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is considered a Day of Service, Please consider rolling up your sleeve to give the gift of blood. Visit the museum's website to schedule a donation appointment. presidentlincoln.illinois.gov. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, 212 N. Sixth St., 217-558-8844.

Mania - The Abba Tribute

Thu., Jan. 18, 7:30-9:30pm. Mania brings to life the flamboyance of the '70s in this recreation of one of ABBA's most memorable concerts. Includes all of the uplifting, dance-inducing and heart-breaking songs from the iconic Swedish band, along with fantastic costumes, staging, lighting and effects. uispac.com. \$30-\$70. UIS Performing Arts Center, One University Plaza, 217-206-6160.

Organist Adrienne Cox

Fri., Jan. 19, 7:30-9:30pm. Part of the Illinois College Fine Arts Series. \$20. Students and children are free. Illinois College Rammelkamp Chapel, Jacksonville, 1101 W. College Ave., 217-245-3192.

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Illinois Secretary of State Driver's License Mobile Unit

Wed., Jan. 24, 11am-2pm. Receive services for Real ID, driver's license renewal, sticker renewal, voter registration and organ donation. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-503-4643.

Tunes from the Toons!

Fri., Jan. 26, 7:30-9pm. Go on a zany adventure as animated cartoon characters come to life through music. From the Mickey Mouse March to Remember Me from Coco to How Far I'll Go from Moana, there's something for everyone. Yaniv Dinur will be the conductor. ilsymphony.org. \$22, \$44, \$66, Students (Age 24 and under): \$10. UIS Performing Arts Center, One University Plaza, 217-522-2838.

Improv Game Night

Sat., Jan. 27, 8pm. Capital City Improv presents Clue, Pictionary, Cards Against Humanity - all your favorite board games, with a twist. hcfta.org. \$15. Hoogland Center for the Arts Club Room, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Dean Z - The Ultimate Elvis

Sat., Jan. 27, 7:30-9:30pm. For nearly two decades, Dean Z has performed thousands of shows for Elvis fans around the globe. He was named by Elvis Presley Enterprises as the world's greatest Elvis tribute artist in 2013. uispac.com. \$29.50-\$125. UIS Performing Arts Center, One University Plaza, 217-206-6160.

1619: The Journey of a People

Sat., Jan. 27, 7pm and Sun., Jan. 28, 2pm. A new musical by Ted Williams III. Three modern characters lead audience members on a journey through multiple performance pieces leaving viewers both inspired and challenged about the progress of America's African sons and daughters. hcfta.org. \$30-\$75. Hoogland Center for the Arts LRS Theatre 1, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Elegant Wedding Expo Winter Edition 2024

Sun., Jan. 28, 12-4pm. Meet wedding professionals, win door prizes, enjoy catered treats and delicious cakes. elegantweddingexpo.com. \$5 or \$40 VIP. BOS Center, 1 Convention Center Plaza, 800-745-3000.

Labyrinth Walk

Mon., Jan. 29, 6-8:30pm. This walking meditation is a unique spiritual experience. aluuc.org. Free. Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 745 Woodside Road, 217-801-2698.



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