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Old-school fashions are in style, but how do you wear them now? Check out our photo gallery at capitalcityregeneration.com

Modern retro style

Vintage inspired TV brings fashion back

From “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel” to “WandVision,” the popularity of vintage-inspired television is making retro styles more fashionable than ever before. “‘Mad Men’ was great for the vintage industry. Everybody wanted to dress like that,” says Linda Renehan of Springfield Vintage. “People enjoy seeing the past and being inspired to find a way to dress it up and use it even today.”

From slim sheath dresses to pencil skirts to quirky bright patterns, the 50s fashion on display in “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel” is exciting and diverse. “The older you get the more you know that everything circles back,” says Renehan, “and this cycle has been picked up by the television shows.” Women’s fashion during the 50s was also all about the mid-length skirt. While this look is more modest, with a contemporary twist it can look completely reinvented.

While the full period pieces are great on their own, the fun for vintage enthusiasts is to find ways to combine the retro with modern styles to accent their look. “Take the classic little polyester work dress with a jacket over it. Sometimes the jacket is what makes it look dated,” Renehan explains. “So when girls go to buy these dresses I tell them to try and put the jacket with another outfit. It would be fun to wear the jacket over a T-shirt and jeans. It’s cute. Plus when you buy vintage, you’re getting a little better cut and a better body.” – Joseph Copley

GET THE LOOK

Old-school fashions are in style, but how do you wear them now? Check out our photo gallery at capitalcityregeneration.com
Experts in our community
What they know that you should

Helping the homeless
Scott Payne, from Argenta, has been helping the community as executive director at Inner City Mission of Springfield for over 28 years. The organization provides shelter, sustenance, education and Christian counseling to homeless children, their parents and single women.

To give or not to give: thoughts on when and how to help. Many people suffer from homelessness or might be lacking stability in life. Knowing when and how to help can be difficult. “I’ve had many calls from moms and grandparents wanting to know what to do about a child or grandchild that might be homeless,” says Payne. “They might be asking for money or to live at home.” Often people want to help but end up giving the person more ways to hurt themselves. The better solution is to find alternative ways to help. “Give them the address of a homeless shelter with a good rehab program,” says Payne. “That way they get what they need. Because enabling them will only continue to spiral the relationship downward.”

Writing a letter to your loved one is a great place to start. One of the first things Payne suggests to people asking how to help a loved one is to write them a letter. Especially if they have to tell them no. “Write a letter and take your time doing this,” says Payne. “Many times putting things in writing clarifies what is said and what we expect to take place before any other actions are to happen.” The letter shouldn’t be accusatory or flippan, but show your compassion for the person and that you want to help. “Give them something they can do so you can respond in a positive way,” says Payne. “You want to help but you’re afraid giving to them will hurt them in the long run. Sometimes a no is the greatest gift you can give a person.” Setting boundaries with loved ones can be difficult but necessary for long-term recovery.

Helping is not just about giving money or things. The best way to help someone experiencing homelessness is to build a relationship with them and learn what they need to succeed. “Helping the homeless isn’t about just giving them things,” says Payne. “But about getting to know the person and giving them what they need to help find joy and peace.”

Volunteering is great... but have a plan. At Inner City Mission there are 16 different levels where people can get involved with the homeless. While the mission is happy to accept any and all volunteers – having a plan as to how your skills can help is important. “Know what your passion or desire is and match it up with an agency that is providing it,” says Payne. “If you love veterans, then work with a veterans program. If you love animals, then work with an animal shelter. Don’t let an organization guilt you into volunteering. Everyone has different passions.” It’s also good to match up your skills with the needs of the organization. “People always volunteer and offer to do anything we need, but maybe you would rather plant flowers than sit at a computer or take phone calls,” says Payne. “Maybe you can paint a room for them. Or unclog toilets. It’s best to be honest about how specifically you can help.”

The staff at shelters can always use encouragement. Many times people jump straight to helping the homeless but it’s also important to support the staff at shelters and poverty alleviation programs. “Working with people in crisis and chaos, you have to be able to absorb the emotions of the people you work with,” says Payne. “Sometimes it’s nice to give something to the employees or volunteers to encourage them with their work. So also ask yourself, how can I support someone who is developing a relationship with homeless?” Words of kindness and nice notes for the mission are always passed on to the staff. –Joseph Copley
If you commit to something, do it. And, do it right. That’s Susan Helm’s mantra – both at work and while volunteering. Her family, professional colleagues and the many people with whom she volunteers see the results firsthand.

Healthy body, healthy mind, healthy environment, healthy community. Helm’s career, extensive volunteer service and personal life demonstrate her commitment to these. Her career involved public relations, marketing and event planning. She was director of marketing for the SIU School of Medicine Department of Surgery for many years. Helm volunteered in numerous capacities while working. This has only intensified since she retired five years ago.

Retired is a misnomer for Helm. She gets more done by 8 a.m. than many people accomplish in a week. You might see her schlepping jugs of water around downtown to nourish native plants, digging in the soil to plant a pollinator garden, helping a group of people with dementia enjoy a program or leading a hike at Lincoln Memorial Garden.

Creating the Men’s Night Out program was a highlight of Helm’s career at SIU School of Medicine. The fun event featured a high-profile sports figure as keynote speaker. Stars such as Lou Brock and Gale Sayers helped attract upwards of 1,000 men to the events, which also included messages about men’s health issues and free health screenings.

She also played a key role with Denim and Diamonds, SIU School of Medicine’s most prominent fundraiser for cancer research. For years Helm directed the marketing in her position at SIU. Since retiring she has continued to volunteer. She co-chaired the 2019 event which raised $320,000, the most in its long history. Patsy Wappel, development officer at SIU School of Medicine, says Helm has tremendous energy and is a huge cheerleader for the SIU Cancer Institute.
Helm is known for having big ideas and the ability to bring them to fruition. Through her diverse interests, she has a network of people with a wide range of expertise. She draws on them to make things happen. She's funny and enthusiastic, and finds creative ways to get others involved and have fun in the process.

Helm's daughter, Jenna Sawicki, says her mother is proof that you can reinvent yourself when you want to. Her mother's actions show that if you are interested in something you can learn and master it. Running and becoming a Master Naturalist are two examples.

Helm started running at age 49. She went on to run half-marathons, helped to pace others running a half-marathon and was a race director for eight years. Now 65, she still runs four to six miles regularly. For 15 years Helm has been a Master Gardener, which requires extensive training and community service. Always wanting to learn more, she also became a Master Naturalist and took time off from work to complete the training. Maintaining these certifications requires 30 volunteer hours annually and 10 hours of continuing education for each. She far exceeds these requirements.

Helm's father died in his 50s. That was a motivation to take up running. She joined Abe's Army, a training program for the Illinois State Fair Abe's Amble 10K race. Participating in Abe's Army made her feel like she could do anything. Through Abe's Army she met Jan Wilson, who was also the Women's Distance Festival race director. Helm helped secure some sponsorships through SIU. A couple years later Helm agreed to direct the race. She decided to "take a cool event and make it better." Using her many connections, she added a huge women's health fair and a kids' fun run. It was the largest
in the history of this race, with 600 women and 200 children participating.

Helm is a driving force behind the many pollinator gardens throughout the city and the native plants downtown. She worked with Michael Higgins on his rooftop garden above Maldaner’s, which is now a Pollinator Pocket and Monarch Waystation. Higgins says that when Helm gets something in mind, she dedicates herself to the project and inspires others to see the vision. She worked with Higgins to get city support for 14 planters along Sixth Street and environmentally friendly bumpouts. She secured a grant to pay for the plants and made sure they survived by lugging jugs of water all over downtown during the growing season.

Native plants are thriving in areas throughout Springfield, thanks to Helm and a cadre of devoted volunteers. She was inspired to help others with dementia after caring for her mother who had Alzheimer’s.

Above:
Susan Helm (left) – downtown beautification day, June 2020

Right, top:
Susan Helm and her husband, Jim, at the 2019 Denim and Diamonds fundraiser for cancer research at SIU which Susan chaired.

Right, bottom:
Minds in Motion fall program. Susan Helm led a bimonthly multisensory-themed program for people with dementia and their caregivers. She was inspired to help others with dementia after caring for her mother who had Alzheimer’s.

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Native plants are thriving in areas throughout Springfield, thanks to Helm and a cadre of devoted volunteers. One example is the native plant restoration near the fishing pier in Washington Park. Helm and Francy Cobern worked with the Springfield Park District and other volunteers to turn a weedy area into a pollinator garden with 1,000 plants. They’ve helped add five more pollinator gardens in the last year – at Stuart, Kennedy, Vredenburg, Comer Cox and Bunn parks.

“When she gets involved, she gets involved!” says Joel Horwedel, director of Lincoln Memorial Garden. Helm is passionate about the garden, serving on the board for two terms, leading nature hikes for kids, helping with native plant sales and flipping pancakes at the annual pancake breakfast. It was her idea to sponsor an 8K trail run at Lincoln Memorial Garden as a new fundraiser. Susan drew on her connections within the running community to make this happen. “Susan is such a pro and so organized,” says Horwedel. She secured sponsors, created nature-themed medals, brought in a whole new group of people to expose to the garden and handed over a check.

Minds in Motion, a program to help people with dementia and their caregivers, is also dear to Helm’s heart. SIU started the program, which Helm led. Twice a month Helm organized multisensory-themed programs involving crafts,
food, storytelling, music and more. Every time was different. Fellow volunteer Barbara Rogers says it was like throwing a big party twice per month. This was personal for Helm, since she had previously cared for her mother who had Alzheimer’s. Helm directed this program in a part-time paid capacity after retiring, and now continues as a volunteer.

Wilson describes Helm as a workhorse who is good at organizing. Rogers, fellow Lincoln Memorial Garden board member and Master Gardener, says Helm is never short on ideas. Helm intermixes her interests and effectively draws on her many connections who have knowledge and resources. Her friends and colleagues have similar things to say about her. She believes in what she does. Once she gets involved, she's all in. She is quick to credit others. She's funny. And, she's fun.

Helm is determined to stay as healthy as possible. She has no intention of slowing down. She has two grandchildren and a third on the way. Helm wants to be able to crawl on the ground with her grandchildren. She intends to be well-read so her grandchildren will find her interesting. She is devoted to her family and committed to being there for them. However, “I may be the kind of grandma you have to make an appointment with,” she quips with a laugh.

Karen Ackerman Witter has long admired Susan Helm. She met Susan through running and her many volunteer activities and continues to be impressed by all that Susan accomplishes.
As 2018 approached, my thoughts revolved around what turning 60 years old would look like in a few months. Every significant birthday, beginning at age 50, then 55 and on, I had vowed to make a change to improve myself in the year ahead. The years passed quickly. The pounds of weight added on easily, until I reached a breaking point and said, "No more!" Past resolutions had not been successful. I knew this year had to be different, because my health was suffering.

A series of events fell into place, initiating a journey I never dreamed would be a life-changer for me. I understand now the role I have in helping and inspiring others. So I am happy to share my story.

My name is Joni Colle. I am currently 62 years old. I have spent 38-plus years caring for patients with chronic lung disease as a Registered Nurse and Registered Respiratory Therapist. Common to this patient population is the phrase, "When you can't breathe, nothing else matters." One of my first red flags was shortness of breath. I could no longer keep up the pace with my co-workers walking down the hallways, and certainly not climbing the stairs at work. I couldn't walk and talk. Yet I coached patients to walk 30 minutes on a treadmill, when I wasn't exercising on a daily basis. I felt like a hypocrite and was not a good role model.

I attended a medical conference in March 2018 to achieve some continuing education credits needed for my professional licenses. I chose to attend a session presented by a cardiologist about his own weight-loss journey. As I listened to the signs and symptoms he faced, I thought to myself, this is exactly ME. Overweight, high cholesterol, fatigued, addicted to sugar, insulin-resistant and depressed. I was headed to becoming another cardiac statistic.

My dad had suffered from coronary artery disease and peripheral vascular
disease, so I knew genetics were not on my side. Another opportunity led me to Dr. Craig Backs of Springfield, at the CureCenter Chronic Disease, where the InBody, a complete body bioelectrical impedance analysis, provided me with meaningful numbers beyond weight and BMI. My visceral fat reading was over 20, off the chart, which meant the fat surrounding my vital organs was at a critical point. At 4 feet 10 inches, I had ballooned to over 200 lbs. I was devastated and had hit rock bottom. Dr. Backs recommended CrossFit Instinct under the supervision of Coach Mike Suhadolnik for a lifestyle change.

For 90 consecutive days I worked out one-on-one in one-hour sessions with Coach Mike, who trained me to exercise safely, perform movements correctly and increase my strength and endurance. But I learned quickly you can never outwork a bad diet. So then I adhered to not eating processed foods, no refined sugar, no dairy, no grains, some starch, and limited fruits. I committed to meals only, no snacks, while drinking at least 128 ounces of water daily. A balanced ratio of macronutrients – 30% protein, 30% fat and 40% carbohydrates – was prescribed.

Intermittent fasting and time-restricted eating was liberating. I ate almost every vegetable grown on a bush, off a tree or out of the ground. Fruits replaced my processed sugar foods. Initially my protein came from fish, eggs and chicken, with minimal red meat. I am currently striving to follow a plant-based diet. Not being a picky eater contributed to my lifelong overeating predication, but I flipped this quality to my advantage by truly appreciating the flavors in a variety of vegetables.

Once my sugar addiction was under control, my brain fog was eliminated. Exercise and proper nutrition aided my mental clarity. My workouts continued with CrossFit Longevity, classes for those 55 and older. My visceral fat level decreased to a normal range, meaning I was no longer insulin resistant. By July 2018 I had lost 40 lbs., then at the six-month mark, people around me had started to notice and remarked, “You are a new person!” I thought to myself, “No, I am the same person, but no longer covered up by 76 lbs. of fat.”

My success was based on finding my “why” in motivation to be healthy, making a commitment and consistently following the plan. I continue to learn how to deal with fear, get out of my comfort zone and face adversity with confidence. This past year of COVID, sheltering in place, social distancing and wearing a mask, has provided the opportunity of utilizing newly learned behaviors. It has not been easy, but hard work always pays off.

I hope sharing a small glimpse of my journey will be helpful to those who need to take the first step. Mentors, coaches or other role models are beneficial for guidance, but there comes a time when you need to love yourself, take personal responsibility and learn how to live out your life, becoming who you were meant to be. After losing 80 lbs., it was great to receive so many compliments, and buy a smaller size in new clothing. But the greater reward is being able to do what I want to do, when I want to do it. That is my definition of health, and that is my focus now.

Joni Colle finds her connection to community through the friendships she has made at CrossFit Instinct Longevity. Warmer weather and sunshine are enticing her to go walking barefoot in Washington Park to decrease inflammation and soak up some Vitamin D. She is sold on the benefits of barefoot walking (Earthing) for the human body.
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St. Louis County, Missouri – Margaret Reynolds’ sewing output has come in waves. As a new mom, she made color-coordinated T-shirts for her three boys. When she retired, she sewed dresses for her granddaughters. And during last spring’s shutdown, Reynolds, 77, dug out her machine once again, fashioning reversible masks in florals, checks and polka dots.

The south St. Louis County resident gave “gobs” to friends and family, then moved on to pajama bottoms for her grandkids and pillow covers for her sister.

“It does take a lot of time to sew and figure out patterns,” she said. “It’s good for the old brain.”

During long days at home, new and old sewers alike have discovered – or rediscovered – an enthusiasm for stitching, quilting and embroidery. And that newfound interest has swelled demand in every corner of the industry. Machines, especially midrange models that run $400 to $800, have been almost impossible to find. The wait list for repair work is weeks long. Store shelves are bereft of fabric.

It’s a dramatic shift after years of steady decline. More young people, and more men, are learning their way around a presser foot and bobbin. Mask-making has been the face of the revival, but shop owners and hobbyists say innovations such as online flash sales and mail-order projects, plus throwbacks like cooperative learning spaces, will extend the trend beyond a pandemic pastime.

Kelly Nicks, owner of retailer O’Sewpersonal, decided to try what she thought would be a monthly Facebook Live fabric sale in June. It quickly became a standing Monday night event.

“We’ve had to change our business plan,” said Nicks, who has locations in O’Fallon, Missouri, and in Collinsville. Five employees do nothing but fulfill Facebook orders, in the
space that used to be set aside for classes.

At Jackman’s Fabrics in Creve Coeur, younger sewers, more comfortable with technology, have been looking for computerized machines to add monograms or customizations to their projects.

“They have a totally different aesthetic, and it really moves the industry along,” said store manager Chris Dodson.

Masks drive trend
Fenton-based Tacony Corp. supplies Baby Lock sewing machines to 500 retailers across the United States. Jeff Fuller, vice president of marketing there, can pinpoint the day when the industry ignited.

On the first Friday in April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended face coverings to stem the spread of coronavirus. By the time Fuller got to work that Monday, some of his stores had completely sold out.

“It was the inflection point in the industry,” said Fuller.

Demand spiked to almost 10 times normal. Back orders took months to fulfill.

Fuller expects growth to continue over the next couple years, with mask-making replaced by upcycling of secondhand garments, quilting
projects, personalized embroidery and costume-making.

“When the world around you becomes uncertain, people turn to home-based projects,” he said.

Fuller learned to sew, too. His first effort was a pair of yoga pants. He said he sewed two left legs on the initial go.

Sue Buerkle of South County pulled her grandmother’s machine, circa 1961, from the closet in the spring. The electrical cord was on the fritz, and the thread tension was off. Buerkle took the Singer Slant-O-Matic – nicknamed Elroy for its resemblance to “The Jetsons” cartoon decor – to Just Sew repair shop.

Will McDonald started his one-man operation in a Richmond Heights basement about a decade ago, after tinkering with his mom’s machines while she worked on dance costumes for his sister.

“He just listens to it,” said Buerkle. “He’s like a doctor.”

Soon, Elroy was humming again, becoming one of the hundreds of Singers, Janomes and Brothers that McDonald resurrected last year from behind his crowded workbench.

“Things really went to a different level,” he said. “It’s like nothing I’ve ever seen.”

McDonald is one of the few remaining independent repairmen, and, at 32, one of the younger ones. He used to consider it an unusually busy day if he fielded 15 phone calls. His record is now 90.

Kim Moos also received a crush of inquiries early in the pandemic. Cotton Cuts, her mail-order fabric business at Chesterfield Mall, sells monthly subscriptions for quilting projects. But in April, everyone wanted to make masks.

“I expected a rush of cancellations, and that didn’t happen,” Moos said. “It kind of rocketed off the charts.”

Moos repackaged “fat quarters,” 18-by-22-inch rectangles of fabric, into mask-making kits. She hired college students to form an assembly line: unrolling bolts of cloth, cutting, folding and packaging. They depleted two years’ worth of inventory in a month.

With the supply chain shaken, Moos seized an opportunity to replenish her fabric by buying out the stock of a quilting store that was closing in Quincy. Cotton Cuts sold 40,000 mask kits through December. Monthly quilt-box subscriptions nearly doubled.

Moos brought on her first full-time
employee in the fall. This month, she moved into a bigger space in the mall. Now, she’s trying to anticipate what will come next.

“We’ve sold all these machines, all this fabric. How do you keep people engaged?” she said. “How do you get to that second project?”

A sanity strategy

For many hobbyists, the key to mastering a new pattern – or freewheeling without one – is having help nearby. Anne Stirnemann opened her Lindenwood Park co-op, City Sewing Room, in 2015, as a nod to the time of quilting bees, when women gathered to piece a bedspread and catch up on each other's lives.

“It’s fun meeting new people, hearing their stories,” Stirnemann said. “It’s a very soothing hobby.”

The co-op offers classes, workspace for rent and secondhand goods for sale. Stirnemann invested in four sewing machines when she opened. The rest – dress forms, steam generators, sergers, crates of fabric and tubes of buttons – has all been donated.

One of her newest acquisitions is a quilting machine with a king-size frame. On a cold night last month, Anne Hennig of Brentwood fed a patchwork of triangles in shades of the sunset through the 11-foot rails, tracing stitches with the help of a computer screen.

Hennig has been quilting for more than a decade. But during the pandemic, “sewing became a sanity strategy,” she said.

Juri Ross of St. Louis is brand-new to the craft. She bought her first machine for $35, used, from the Sewing Room last month. Ross, who is studying to be a surgical technician, wants to create her own line of scrubs.

In her first lessons, she learned how to loop the thread, wind the bobbin and pin her fabric. “It’s way harder than I thought,” she said.

The scrubs are still on, but Ross has pushed the launch back from March to October, giving her more time under Stirnemann’s wing.

“There’s so many small steps to remember,” Ross said. “It’s something you have to constantly practice or you forget.”

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Alzheimer’s & Dementia Specialty Care
Funk’s Grove is a sweet spot, especially for those looking for some tall perspective in these pandemic times. Just off I-55 some 15 miles south of Bloomington, the place offers pure maple sirup, a museum full of minerals and towering trees looming over an outdoor chapel.

Those trees and their ancestors have been around through some significant history in the area, settled in 1824 by Issac Funk. Still-standing Civil War-era structures, the birthplace of commercial hybrid corn and the midpoint of Route 66 in Illinois make Funk’s Grove unique.

While you wait for all COVID-19 restrictions to lift, your best bet is watching fifth- and sixth-generation Funks tap maples to collect sap for their premium sirup, according to Debby Funk, who heads the operation with her husband, Mike. Sap collection continues until the weather turns warm and the trees start to bud. “That ends the season because the sap has an off-taste,” she explains.

Funk says that in normal times, visitors would be welcomed into the sugar house to see the sap turned into sirup, but the family doesn’t want to take any chances this year. Visitors also can’t go in the gift shop but can buy sirup and other maple products at the walk-up window.

The family loves continuing the tradition, including the different spelling of syrup, Funk says. “We’re able to make really good maple sirup that we know people appreciate. It’s an actual product that customers can see how it is made and know where it comes from.”

The 2,000 gallons of sirup produced each season sell out in August or September, she says. Funk’s Grove gets visitors from around the world, many of whom are traveling nearby Route 66.
Any time of year, visitors can find a serene respite at the Chapel of the Templed Trees, where ancient timbers form a leaf ceiling over American Red Elm-log pews and a stump for a pulpit. The open-air setting is popular for weddings and as a place to commune with nature. Some of the trees host inspirational plaques and are part of an 18-acre nature preserve within the larger Funk’s Grove, one of the largest remnants of virgin forest in Illinois and a National Nature Landmark.

Nearby is the Funk’s Grove church and cemetery, further documenting the area’s history. Two generations of Funks in 1864-65 built the church from white pine shipped by railroad from the east. Horse and hog hair helped bind together the plaster ceiling. Today’s visitors, limited by COVID-19 restrictions to appointments, can view such original features as the Funk’s Grove walnut ceiling beams, altar rail, pulpit and pew dividers used to separate men and women.

Walking paths and a covered picnic shelter grace the grounds.

Another good place for walking is the seven miles of foot trails at Sugar Grove, just down the road and open from dawn to dusk. Several patches of restored prairie grass, woods, birds and a creek provide interest, and all but one of the hiking trails are dog-friendly. Children can explore nature at the outdoor Imagination Grove with a climbing tree, lookout tower and creek access. A corn crib and restrooms are open too.

In non-pandemic times, the Nature Center building is home to native wildlife such as reptiles, amphibians and insects and hosts educational programs, blacksmith demonstrations and star gazing.

Above:
Some trees in the Chapel of the Templed Trees at Funk’s Grove have sayings to inspire visitors to the serene spot.

Left:
The Chapel of the Templed Trees at Funk’s Grove, just off I-55 south of Bloomington, offers a quiet place to contemplate nature. The chapel’s pews are cut from American Red Elms.
Also awaiting pandemic subsiding is the Civil War-era Funk home, museum and restored pre-Civil War barn. Bill Case, tour guide and historian for the three sites, is eager to welcome the public back, once things open up more in Illinois.

“We are an historic house and there are many, but the difference here is that the 13 rooms are wide open and almost everything in the house is original,” Case says. “It tells the unique story of a family that has influenced the whole world” with the first commercial sale of hybrid corn in 1916.

Lafayette Funk Sr. finished the house in 1864 as a wedding gift to his fiancée. Case notes that Lafayette Sr. helped start the state fair, boosted the University of Illinois College of Agriculture and served as a director of the Union Stockyards in Chicago. His eldest son, E.D. Funk, and E.D.’s cousins started the seed company.

It was Lafayette Funk II, one of E.D.’s eight children, who traveled the world collecting thousands of minerals and opened the museum to house them and his other collections. Today the building includes a fossil room, a Native American artifact room, an ultraviolet room for fluorescent minerals and multiple cases of rare Chinese carved soapstone.

Visitors can look at antique buggies, sleighs and saddles. The Funks also were famous for raising Percheron draft horses, Case says, and a wing off the museum houses horse-drawn farm equipment. The restored barn has stalls inhabited by goats and sheep today.

Once tours open, visitors can enjoy them for free from the beginning of March to the end of December except for Thanksgiving and Christmas days. Case recommends making reservations.

For information about Funk’s Grove, go to www.funkspuremaplesirup.com (sirup making and sales), www.funksgrove.com (area, church and cemetery history) and www.funksgrove.org/PrairieHouse (tours of house, museum and barn). For information about Sugar Grove, go to www.sugargrovenaturecenter.org.

Mary Bohlen, a Springfield travel writer, first visited Funk’s Grove as a child.

Stephen Funk drills into one of the hundreds of maple trees at Funk’s Grove near Bloomington to collect sap for the family’s famous maple sirup.
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Small Illinois towns with big names

By Cinda Ackerman Klickna

People look forward to the time when travel will again be possible and dream of places to visit. Maybe to London, Liverpool or Windsor? How about Paris, Venice, Rome, Brussels or Vienna? Possibly to ancient cities of Sparta, Thebes or Troy? Or places in the south such as Bolivia, Cuba, Jamaica or Panama?

Visiting faraway places seems like a far-off idea, but wait. Getting on a plane is not necessary; just hop in your car. All of these towns, plus more, exist in Illinois. Laurent Pernot’s There and Here, Small Illinois Towns with Big Names offers a fun journey “here” to towns with the same names as big cities over “there.”

Pernot spent 10 years crisscrossing the state. The book is interesting on several levels: showcasing Illinois small towns with names of more famous places, capturing unique facets of rural and small-town life through superb photography, and presenting interesting information about each town.

The book is divided into “Capitals,” “The Towns” and “En Route.”

Capitals
Illinois has had six capitals, including Cahokia Mounds (seat of the ancient Mississippian culture), Fort de Chartres (France’s Upper Louisiana capital in the 1720s) and Nauvoo (the Mormon “Temple City” from 1839-1846), as well as Kaskaskia and Vandalia, both seats of the state capital prior to Springfield.

The Towns
The author starts with Alhambra (name of the Spanish castle built in 711), ends with Zion (named to become the new Jerusalem, “Zion,” in 1899) and visits other towns with famous names in alphabetical order. Text includes pertinent information about the town: history, prominent settlers or leaders, growth and development, even uses in pieces of literature. Washington Irving, for example, wrote The Alhambra, also known as his Spanish Sketch Book.
Pernot honestly relates some unsavory facts about towns – the 1908 Race Riot in Springfield, a lynching in Mt. Zion, slavery in Kaskaskia, the Indian Trail of Death through Naples.

**En Route**
This section creates a montage of photos under headings such as “Worship” with a photo of the Baha’i Temple in Wilmette, and “Stores” with the ice-cream-cone-designed Twistee Treat Diner on Route 66 in Livingston.

Photos at the front and back of the book are fitting, starting with a “Welcome to Illinois” sign and ending with a “Road Ends” sign next to an abandoned lane.

Pernot’s photography is stunning, and one way to enjoy the book is to flip through the pages. He has included pictures that perfectly capture what we see when driving through small towns and the Illinois countryside. He ventures off the interstates and major highways to show us charming streets and shops, popular cafes and unique signs, a welcoming front porch, a stately home, a county courthouse, abandoned tractors, trucks and antique signs. He takes us down

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**There and Here – Small Illinois Towns with Big Names**
by Laurent Pernot, 236 pages, $24.99. The book is available through the author’s website: laurentpernotbooks.com or by e-book on Google and Amazon.

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**Treasures just down the road**
**A conversation with Laurent Pernot**

Laurent Pernot grew up in France, near the Swiss border. He came to Illinois as a foreign exchange student in high school almost 30 years ago. His teacher commented that he was from France and said she was from Paris. He says, “I started speaking French and she didn’t know what I was saying. Then she said, ‘No, I am from Paris, Illinois.’ I didn’t know there was a Paris in Illinois. That was really the genesis of my interest.”

That interest was further sparked when Pernot had a job with City Colleges of Chicago that required trips to Springfield, often to testify on bills at the Capitol. “I kept passing signs for places off the highway and decided to go off the road and see things.” That he did, often. Ten years later he has published There and Here, Small Illinois Towns with Big Names. In writing the book, for which he took all the photographs, he crisscrossed the state many times.

Pernot says, “I went through towns without doing any research first, just to get a sense of the place and see things.” Later, he would discover more about the town by doing research. Some of the facts he discovered were not pleasant, such as sites of lynchings. “That was eye-opening,” Pernot explains. “We weren’t taught about that in France and even in Illinois we aren’t taught that.” To him, history is “complex.” He calls his book a “love letter to my state,” but adds, “I had to be frank about some of the information I discovered.”

Pernot thought the complex history should be shared. “I think we suffer as a state,” he offers. “We belittle it too much and think to see things you have to go to Wisconsin or Missouri. But we sit on treasures that are charming, full of history and just down the road.”

Pernot lives near Chicago with his wife and children. His parents live in France, although, due to COVID, he has not been able to visit.

–Cinda Ackerman Klickna
unpaved, dusty roads and past cabins and creek beds, over one-lane stone bridges, near bluffs and rivers, and across fields. Photos highlight various times of the year – Fourth of July banners, a scarecrow near a road, Christmas wreaths, winter snow, spring redwoods – and different times of the day – a sunrise over a field, the sunset silhouetting a windmill. Remnants of frontier life, abandoned and overgrown farms, fruit stands, rusting grain bins, a ferry on the river. His photos are captivating.

Through the text, we learn that Savoy was named after Prince Jerome Napoleon and his wife, Clothilde of Savoy, who visited in the summer of 1861, traveling by train from Chicago to St. Louis and writing home about the “hamlets” of Illinois. We learn that Chester in England is a walled city; Pernot says the Chester in Illinois, “never did need fortifications; it has Popeye, fortified by his famous spinach.” Pictured is the Popeye Museum with a sign sporting a spinach can.

The name of the town Limerick is cleverly described with a limerick: “To say its name is for the Irish city would be a trick/’cause it came from an Irish lad named Limerick./He arrived in Eighteen Thirty-Nine/’cause the missus deemed the spot fine./The town didn’t really grow but the name did stick.”

Pernot grew up in France, came to Illinois as a foreign exchange student and now lives in Highland Park. He is the chief of staff at Columbia College Chicago. In the introduction he explains his book “documents a rapidly disappearing Illinois…. Each town is a discovery, whether for a few minutes or a few days.”

There and Here is a gem – a book to definitely pick up. It gives a glimpse into the history of our towns, captures the essence of our state with wonderful photography and provides ideas of places to visit by hopping in the car and driving, staying socially distanced, rather than getting on a plane. Over “there” can be saved for safer times.

Cinda Ackerman Klickna of Rochester has written about the origin of Illinois town names for the Illinois State Historical Society and found this book fascinating.
The senior advocacy group AARP is backing legislation aimed at addressing racial disparities in health care, economic security and digital connectivity for Illinoisans over 50.

AARP Illinois, alongside community advocacy groups such as Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Chicago, the Chicago Urban League and the Resurrection Project, released a report in February analyzing substantial gaps between white Illinoisans aged 50 and over, and minority groups in that age range. The research was conducted by Loyola University Chicago.

That report, as part of the “Disrupt Disparities Initiative,” provides several policy recommendations to be taken up as bills in the General Assembly to solve some of the challenges faced by older Illinoisans.

One of the policy recommendations under the subject of economic security is to expand the Illinois Secure Choice savings program, a retirement savings program for workers, to be available to workers at small businesses even if they have just one employee. Currently, businesses that do not provide a retirement plan for their workers are only required to enroll in Secure Choice if they have 25 employees or more and have been operational for two years.

Another policy recommendation to be solved via legislation is the expansion of eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit to include caregivers and adults who are 65 and over. According to the report, Black and Hispanic Illinoisans are overrepresented in low-wage jobs not covered by the EITC.

Many of the health issues highlighted in the report have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Black, Hispanic and Asian...
Illinoisans have died at rates higher than their share of the state population, and at higher rates than their white neighbors. “Older adults of color have suffered from the effects of disparities that lead to health problems, unequal access to reliable health care and limited economic resources for far too long,” said state Rep. Theresa Mah, D-Chicago. “The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us all the devastating impact of these inequities, and that urgent action must be taken to ensure that our adults of color can live healthy and fulfilling lives.”

The prevalence of telehealth has also been a consequence of COVID-19. Consultations and medical visits with health care professionals have increasingly taken place over the phone or via video chat as restrictions on in-person contact were put in place to mitigate the spread.

It’s also a useful tool independent of the pandemic for older Illinoisans who do not have easy access to health care professionals or facilities. According to the report, older adults who use the internet had improved outcomes in knowing their health issues, communicating with medical professionals and using health services. It also correlated with better cognitive functioning, independence and interpersonal interaction with healthy adults.

However, there is a digital divide along racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines regarding who has the internet access for telehealth. Approximately 20 percent of Illinoisans over 50 do not have broadband or internet access, with Black and Hispanic residents having the lowest rates of access.

As part of their recommendations for expanding access, the Disrupt Disparities Initiative is calling for the Illinois Broadband Advisory Council, to which members are appointed by Gov. JB Pritzker, to reflect the multicultural makeup of the state. The board oversees the $420 million Connect Illinois program enacted by the Pritzker administration to expand broadband connectivity throughout the state by 2024. AARP currently has a member on that board.
Today, over a third of Illinois residents are age 50 or over. Like much of the U.S., the state’s population is getting older, with those over 50 being a larger share of the population than in decades past. It’s also becoming more ethnically diverse.

The Disrupt Disparities initiative is embarking on a multi-year effort with lawmakers and government agencies to “create systemic policy changes on behalf of, and with, older adults of color.” The initiative is hosting a summit with the Illinois Department on Aging on April 26 and 27.

“We must make policy changes now to address these challenges, reduce these disparities, and make sure all older adults in Illinois can age with dignity, health and security in the communities of their choice,” the report’s conclusion reads.
These **LEADING LAWYERS** have been recommended by their peers to be among the **TOP LAWYERS** in Illinois.

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A lawyer CANNOT buy the distinction of Leading or Emerging Lawyer. The distinction was earned by being among those lawyers most often recommended by their peers. For a full description of our research process, a complete list of all Leading or Emerging Lawyers, and to view profiles of the lawyers listed on this page, go to www.LeadingLawyers.com
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.

“Contemplative Expressions”
Through April 1. The work of SAA Collective juried artist members from across central Illinois are on display. springfieldart.org. SAA Collective Gallery, 105 N. Fifth St. 217-544-2787.

Jazz guitar hour: An interactive weekly podcast

Springfield Poets and Writers open mic
Third Wednesday of every month, 6-8pm. Read some poetry, prose or nonfiction, whether your original work or the work of a favorite author. You can also just relax and listen. Free. Get the Zoom link at springfieldpoetsandwriters.com. 217-725-9058.

How to spot fake news
Third Thursday of every month, 2-3pm. Feeling overwhelmed by the minefield of information on Facebook? Learn about the different types of fake news, how to tell the difference between what’s true and what’s fake and tips for evaluating sources. Via Zoom. lincolnlibrary.info. 218-753-4900.

Dynamic Duos Dancing with the Starz virtual fundraiser
Sat., March 20-Sat., March 27. Enjoy an art-filled silent auction and entertaining videos of the area’s great dynamic duos as they take to the dance floor. Then, tune in March 27 at 7 p.m. when the champions are announced. This annual event benefits the Springfield Art Association. springfieldart.org. 217-523-2631.

Elegant Bridal Expo
Sat., March 20, 12-4pm. Over 50 wedding vendors, door prizes, tablescapes, photo booths, lots of swag. VIP tickets include admission plus one guest, wedding

**Brown Bag Concert**

**Light Catcher Glass Workshop**
Wednesday, March 24, 6-9pm. Learn some hot glass basics with the resident glassblower. springfieldart.org. Members $45 and $55 non-members. Springfield Art Association, 700 N. Fourth St., 217-523-2631.

**Kenny Smith**
Thu., March 25, 7:30pm. APL’s annual comedy night featuring comedian Kenny Smith. Tickets available at the shelter or online at illinoistimestix.com, and include a free appetizer. The evening will also include a silent auction. All proceeds benefit the animals at APL. apl-shelter.org. $20-$25. VFW Post #755, 2211 Old Jacksonville Rd., 217-546-9515.

**The Women of Sangamon County**
Thu., March 25, 6pm. Erika Holst will discuss the lives of women in early Sangamon County. Includes Q&A session. Produced by the Sangamon Experience at UIS and will livestream on its Facebook and Twitter pages and YouTube Channel. uis.edu/sangamonexperience.com. 217-206-8050.

**Botany Behind the Scenes**

**Brown Bag Concert**

**Coal Age Plants of Illinois**
Wed., April 7, 6-7pm. Join Illinois
State Museum curator of geology, Melissa Pardi, for an exploration of the paleobotany collections from the Age of Coal. Part of Big Read Sangamon County sponsored by LLCC Academy of Lifelong Learning. illinoisstatemuseum.org. Free with registration. 217-785-0037.

2020 DIRTcar Fall Nationals rescheduled
Fri., April 9, DIRTcar super late models, modifieds, pro-modifieds, and sport compacts (Horns). An open practice is scheduled for Thursday, April 8. Lincoln Speedway, Lincoln, 1408 Short 11th St., 217-764-3200.

Civil War Tour of the Mid-Atlantic
April 11-16. $804 per person double occupancy or $1,103 per person for single occupancy and includes motor coach transportation, 5 nights lodging, 5 breakfasts and 3 dinners. centralilseniors.org. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-528-4035.

Spain and Portugal Douro River Cruise
April 19-27. Cost is $4,675 - $6,475 per person double occupancy or $5,975 - $8,675 per person single occupancy, and is dependent on cabin choice. centralilseniors.org. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-528-4035.

Kansas City, Missouri travel opportunity
May 4-8. Cost is $1,074 per person double occupancy or $1,323 per person single occupancy. centralilseniors.org. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-528-4035.

Hammer-In
Sat., May 15. Tour the historic site and watch the blacksmiths at work. clayville.org. Clayville Historic Site, Pleasant Plains, Route 125, 217-481-4430.

Riverdance 25th Anniversary Show
Tue., May 25, 7:30-9:30pm. A powerful and stirring reinvention of this favorite, celebrated the world over for its award-winning score and the thrilling energy. $45+. UIS Performing Arts Center, One University Plaza, 217-206-6160.

Great Canadian Cities travel opportunity
June 16-24. Cost is $3,575 per person double occupancy or $4,600 per person single occupancy. Ask about pricing discount. centralilseniors.org. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-528-4035.
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