

CHAMBER REPORT

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PEORIA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

www.peoriachamber.org



**OCTOBER
2020**

Vol.25 Issue 4



MEMBER FEATURE: **CARSTAR/O-ONO UNLIMITED LLC.**



WELCOME NEW CHAMBER MEMBERS

Employee Size Code (number of full-time equivalent employees in the tri-county area):

(A) 1-10 (B) 11-25 (C) 26-75 (D) 76-150 (E) 151-300 (F) 300+

Amy's Homegoods (A)
2411-D W. Pioneer Parkway
Peoria, IL 61615

Central Illinois Equipment Sales, Inc. (A)
2702 SW Jefferson Avenue
Peoria, IL 61605

Lowes – Peoria (D)
5001 N. Big Hollow Road
Peoria, IL 61615

**Shane & Shielondria Parker Boutique
Photography Studio (A)**
Peoria, IL 61603

Shields Accounting Services (A)
430 N. Main Street
East Peoria, IL 61611

TAG Communications (B)
230 East Second Street
Davenport, IA 52801

Trinity on Glen (C)
2301 W. Glen
Peoria, IL 61604

Verlo Mattress Store (A)
4538 N. Brandywine Drive
Peoria, IL 61614

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Upcoming Events

October 19-22, 11:30am-1pm
The Virtual Big Table: Greater Peoria 2020
Register Now at BigTableGP.com

Save The Date: November 21
Virtual Thanksgiving Luncheon 2020

November 18, December 2 & 16, 11:30am-1pm
PACC & Bradley University Webinar Series
presented by Central IL Dale Carnegie - details to follow



MEMBER FEATURE O-ONO UNLIMITED LLC

Local Entrepreneur's Ventures Grow to Benefit Community

Ken Allison has been a small business owner and entrepreneur in the Peoria area since 2012 when he started Allison Tax and Consulting (now doing business as O-ONO Unlimited Inc.). With the understanding that small businesses are the financial backbone of any community, Ken recognized a need to help support our local economy. First, he purchased a few financially distressed businesses. Then, he evaluated the gross margins and made necessary adjustments to reestablish them as more successful entities. Next, he created O-ONO Unlimited Inc. as an umbrella organization to act as a "shared service" and manage their futures. This group of businesses grew to include CARSTAR North Peoria, Mack's, ONO Construction, and



Throttle Bar + Grill in East Peoria. After just a few years, O-ONO Unlimited Inc. grew to provide other local small businesses with payroll and accounting, consulting, financial management, business development, and marketing and public relations services.

In addition to providing its services to local small businesses, O-ONO Unlimited Inc. made serving our local not-for-profit community a priority. In fact, after learning of the pandemic's negative impact on nonprofits, Ken knew his collaborative could help. He assessed local needs, then encouraged and led his team to help raise awareness, promote giving, and collect donations for multiple organizations. According to Ken, "Small businesses have a greater responsibility to our communities aside from simply earning a living. Now, more than ever, we have to do more. We have to step up knowing that profitability always follows the kind-hearted." To date, O-ONO Unlimited Inc. has worked with Family House, Front Nine Foundation, Gold Star Mission 500, Department of Defense Warrior Games, Moms Who Care, Neighborhood House Association of Peoria, and Peoria Rescue Ministries.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK:

Why in the world would you come to Peoria?

Getting a new job is exciting; getting a new job that you enjoy in a new city that you really like? Second to none. I am extremely honored and excited to serve as the new President and CEO of the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce and CEO Council, but in sharing the news with others, let's just say some folks didn't quite understand that excitement.

I'm from Durham, North Carolina and had been serving as Vice President at the Durham Chamber of Commerce for the past four years; in addition to being my hometown, Durham is an amazing city and one that attracts thousands of new people every year to experience the great quality of life and booming economy in the North Carolina's Triangle region. While there was a time when Durham didn't have the best reputation, the past two decades have resulted in exponential growth and it's now a place where people are very proud to live; so, it's no surprise that people would be shocked to hear that I'd chosen to leave. This shock however, was magnified when I shared the city I'd be leaving them for; "Peoria?!" "Where is that?" "What are you thinking?" Surely, I must be running away from something right? No way, someone would leave Durham for Peoria, right?

I forgave their responses because I knew most of them had never been here. Like me, they likely had only a few frames of reference for Peoria, if any. Most know Peoria as the home of Caterpillar, or as the "quintessential American city," a place that advertisers, artists and politicians alike once used as the "standard" for what products or messages would resonate well with the "average American." But perhaps, in 2020 they can't think of any reason someone would move to Peoria. I'll give them the benefit of the doubt. But there was something else even more striking for me; people who live right here in Peoria who asked me "Why in the world would you come to Peoria?"

I wrestled with how I would reply when asked that question. Could it be the breathtaking topography of the region? The way the broad Illinois river flows across the city, or the breeze coming off the water as you're enjoying the panoramic views? The strength of the skyline that immediately catches your attention driving into the city from any direction? Or is it the history, the amazing culture of innovation that took penicillin from a great idea, to a lifesaving global cure; or that same innovation culture that turned a tractor company into an iconic world leader in manufacturing? Is it the world-class healthcare systems, the top-tier community college and university or the dynamic business community? Is it the festival scene? The arts scene? The great food and drinks?

As you can see, I could go on and on about all the reasons I've chosen to make Peoria home for my family and me. But the one reason that really stands out to me is simple; it's the people. The people of Peoria

have proven warm, welcoming and generous since the first day we set foot in the city. The hardworking culture of the people stands out to me right away. People are dedicated to their businesses, their jobs and also to their community. Peoria has a remarkable philanthropic culture, one that outperforms cities of much larger population, which speaks to a genuine commitment to the place we call home. That may feel like something any community would say, and many might; but few could honestly claim to have a culture of dedication and giving that rivals Peoria.

Perhaps it is the fact that I am an "outsider," and it can be easy to take these assets for granted when you've been here a while. But Peoria is truly special, and I'm dedicated to helping everyone see just how special it is. These characteristics were very attractive to me, and ultimately helped make the decision to leave a city that I love so much in Durham, and find a new love for a new city right here in central Illinois. I believe though, that those characteristics will also prove attractive for many others, as people look for a better quality of life, away from the overcrowded megacities. I also believe that the resilience and talent of our workforce right here in Peoria, makes us perfectly positioned to bounce back from this pandemic as a business and workforce destination, and even better than ever before.

I am honored to serve in this role, and to call Peoria home. I look forward to helping our community recognize and leverage our assets to tell our story to the world. I also look forward to leaning into the very real challenges we face. Peoria is special, but Peoria isn't perfect. That's ok. I believe that we have what it takes to be honest about our challenges as a community, to lean into uncomfortable conversations and to rebuild a more equitable Peoria economy that truly works for everyone. I believe the business community has an important role to play in this process and remain committed to working with our members and the broader community to ensure that we not only survive the pandemic, but that we thrive. As remarkable as Peoria's history is, I truly believe that Peoria's best days are yet to come. I look forward to embracing the hardworking Peoria culture and building this together, so that the next time someone asks "Why in the World would you come to Peoria?" we can all say in unison, "because there's no other place I'd rather be."



Joshua Gunn

President and CEO
Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce & CEO Council



STANDIFIRD:

Partnerships key to Bradley's, Peoria's success



has streamlined things tremendously. It's worked very well so far."

Building relationships with local businesses and organizations isn't new for Standifird. Prior to joining Bradley, he served on the boards of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, the Women's Fund of Central Indiana and the Central Indiana Academy of Dance.

Standifird added he looks forward to doing more in the community, especially when current restrictions ease. He said his family is thrilled about being at Bradley and

Like any new president, Bradley's Stephen Standifird has set a number of goals to achieve. One of the most important is building relationships between the university and the Peoria community.

in Peoria. Already their daughters, Sorana, 11, and Brianna, 7, have joined Peoria Ballet Academy.

"I believe Bradley is an important part of the community and an important part of who we are," he said. "Having a strong connection between us only makes sense."

"My wife, Vivian, and I spoke recently about the close friends we've made already," said Standifird. "We're so impressed with how warm and welcoming everyone's been. I feel confident once we weather this current crisis, we'll be able to strengthen Bradley's role in the community and forge new relationships. These partnerships will be key not just to our survival, but also our ability to thrive long term."

While the COVID-19 pandemic has meant fewer opportunities for students, faculty and staff to engage with local businesses and organizations, Bradley's ongoing partnership with OSF HealthCare remains strong. The two entities worked together to develop the university's testing, surveillance testing and contract tracing process.

"OSF played such a key role in helping us think through the process and have responded quickly as things came up. Having our health center run by OSF — the director is an OSF employee —



awards & recognition

Advanced Correctional Healthcare, Inc. (ACH) is excited to announce Joshua Cather's promotion to Regional Nurse Manager in the Northwest, and Jessie Barks' promotion to Human Resources Generalist! ACH welcomes Carlee Baysingar, Accounting Intern, Angela Funk, Regional Nurse Manager, and Jessica Overturf, Administrative Assistant, to our business family! Kimberly Meek was promoted to Regional Nurse Manager in the Northwest, and Renee Spann was promoted to Start Up Team Member. Congratulations to Kyra Martinez on receiving an Associate Degree in Nursing and to Maria Escamilla on receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing. Jessie Barks also completed her Professional in Human Resources Certification! ACH was honored to present Overdose Revival Awards to staff at Fond du Lac, Wisconsin and Boone, Missouri. These individuals performed an exceptional act under emergency conditions, and the action rendered directly resulted in sustaining a human life. Danielle Allen was also presented with a DAISY Award, an award that recognizes extraordinary care to patients. 5 Year Service Awards were presented to Helen Terry, Deborah Rohman, Stephanie

Vanatti, Kristen Mott, Teresa Klavekoske, Jeniffer Pellersels, Carrie Sinclair, Kristen Adkins, and Sara Miller. Brandi Malcook and Rebecca Petersen received their 10 Year Service Awards, and Jessica Young was presented with a 15 Year Service Award!

Adult & Teen Challenge Illinois (formerly Teen Challenge Peoria) is proud to announce that this October, they are celebrating 20 years of providing healing, health, and hope to the Peoria area.

Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (CityLink) has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2019. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

Howard & Howard is pleased to announce that thirty of our attorneys were selected for inclusion in The Best

Lawyers in America© 2021 and five of our attorneys were included in the inaugural edition of Best Lawyers®: Ones to Watch.

The Illinois Central College Culinary Arts Institute received re-accreditation from the prestigious American Culinary Federation Education Foundation's Accrediting Commission (ACFEFAC) for its Associate in Applied Science Degree in Culinary Arts Management program. Remarkably, the ICC program is one of only two Illinois culinary schools with the rare Exemplary status and the only one outside of Chicago.

Methodist College Bachelor of Social Work program was granted initial accreditation through June 2024 by the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Methodist College started the baccalaureate social work program in fall 2017, and in spring 2020, four students graduated from the program. The program prepares students to be social work generalists with the ability to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of settings to include educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and hospitals and clinics.

The Peoria Historical Society declared Linda Daley the 2020 Henri de Tonti Award winner. The annual award recognizes individuals and organizations demonstrating outstanding community leadership.

Savant Wealth Management (formerly Savant Capital Management), a nationally recognized, fee-only advisory firm headquartered in Rockford, with locations also in Peoria and Bloomington, has been recognized by InvestmentNews as one of the top 50 fee-only Registered Investment Advisors (RIAs) in the nation. This is the thirteenth time Savant has been recognized by the financial trade publication.

UnityPoint Health – Methodist Hospital is getting recognition from U.S. News and World Report in several categories. Methodist was rated the 23rd best hospital in the state of Illinois, based on criteria such as patient outcomes, patient experience and expert

business moves

The **American Red Cross of Illinois** is pleased to announce that Drew Brown has joined the organization as the new Marketing & Communications Manager.

business moves

First Mid Bank & Trust was recently awarded \$20,000 in grant funding from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago COVID-19 Relief Grant Program to assist small businesses and nonprofits affected by the pandemic. Today, the bank has announced that the awarded grant funds will be distributed across the bank's footprint to local food pantries.

Hanson Professional Services Inc. recently welcomed Samuel Steiner as a full-time structural designer at the Peoria office. He will assist with structural calculations, construction drawings and building information modeling for facilities' structural projects.

Illinois Central College named Bill Hébert Jr. (AY-bear) of Madison, WI, as Vice President of Student Success. He will oversee student services, student development, student success, enrollment services and athletics.

Savant Wealth Management (formerly Savant Capital Management), a nationally recognized, fee-only advisory firm headquartered in Rockford, with locations also in Peoria and Bloomington, today unveiled its "Wise Counsel" rebrand that includes a new company logo, color palette, website, name change

and tagline.

Slater Wealth Management is pleased to welcome to their team two Wealth Advisors: Adam P. Ghantous and Michael T. Chance. Both advisors have been serving clients in Central Illinois for a combined 52 years and Slater Wealth Management is honored to have them work alongside their founding advisor, Brian D. Slater.

member news

Adult & Teen Challenge Illinois (formerly Teen Challenge Peoria) has been selected by the National Adult & Teen Challenge USA office to be an innovation center. They have been chosen as a result of their dedication, standard of excellence and commitment to the mission, values and vision of reaching out to those bound by life controlling behavioral disorders. They have moved their south side Peoria location to 2400 N. 8th St. Pekin (next to Ray Dennison Chevrolet). Along with the move, came a name change. They are now, Adult & Teen Challenge Illinois.

CityLink received a \$10 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), a division of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), for the construction of bus maintenance and operations facilities.

member news

This grant is part of the FTA's Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program, which makes federal resources available to states and direct recipients to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities.

Three **F&M Bank** employees have recently been appointed to 2020-2021 Illinois Bankers Association (IBA) committees. Pat Colwell, Vice President and Project Manager, was appointed as a member of the Illinois Bankers Association's 2020-2021 Technology and Operations Committee. Rhonda Houzenga, Vice President, Marketing and Public Relations, was appointed as the Chairman of the 2020-2021 Illinois Bankers Association's Communications and Marketing Committee. Diana Whitson, Vice President, Human Resources & Executive Administration, was appointed to the Illinois Bankers Association's 2020-2021 Human Resources Committee.

The Hult Center received funding from the city's Community Development Block Grant, which supports services that prevent,

prepare for and respond to the pandemic. With that money, the Hult Center is launching a Neighborhood Response Team.

Illinois Central College announces the launch of a new equity initiative program, ICC GEER Project, with funding from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, and through efforts championed by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Senator Dave Koehler and the Peoria Mayor's Coalition on Racial Justice and Equity. The \$412,000 grant will be used to support efforts to enroll and retain underrepresented, first-generation and low-income students who may not otherwise enroll in or return to college due to the pandemic or digital equity gaps.



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AMEREN NEWS

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HUMANA NEWS

Tips for having difficult, but critical, conversations about race in the workplace



An inclusive workplace can be a comfortable place to have uncomfortable conversations. Employers can address difficult topics like race by creating a culture of inclusion where every employee can share their thoughts, feelings and experiences.

"We can't let the fear of imperfection keep us from trying to make some sort of advancement in this conversation and to have some dialogue with our teams," said Douglas Edwards, senior vice president of workplace experience for Humana.

Humana launched a series of race-related conversations in the workplace when social unrest began rising earlier this year. "We wanted to have a safe space for associates of color to react, to respond, to vent, or to just talk about what they were seeing and to react to it," said Chris Johnson, director of inclusion and diversity for Humana.

Creating a top-down culture of inclusion

Inclusive leadership is also key to creating a culture in which everyone feels they belong and is comfortable expressing their uniqueness.

Humana encourages leaders to reflect on their identity and intention before starting a race-related conversation. Recognizing and managing their personal unconscious biases can help leaders create a more inclusive culture.

Discussing race in the workplace

Humana created safe spaces for employees to share by guiding leaders in how to have race-related conversations. Leaders learned to acknowledge the issues in their communities, to prepare for dialogue and to ask teammates for help.

Ground rules for Humana team members having tough conversations included:

- Listening to understand.
- Assuming positive intent or choosing to believe that people act and speak to the best of their ability, and for the benefit of others.
- Engaging in dialogue, not debate.
- Customizing the conversation so that others in the group could add their own ground rules.

"Associates are going to be honest, as long as they know this will be long-lasting and structural," Johnson said. "We want to embrace that notion of being comfortable with being uncomfortable. These conversations are all about letting the moment drive the agenda."

To help leaders create a safe space for open dialogue, Humana has shared their Leaders' Guide to having race-related conversations, with useful checklists and conversation prompts at www.Humana.com.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS OF GREATER PEORIA

YPGP Events:

Monthly Socials

To Be Announced.

Typically, Socials start at 5pm and will likely be virtual into cooler months.

Stay Tuned!

October 9-10

YPGP & The Kim Group present: Casper at the Drive-In Fundraiser at Keller Station benefiting Heart of IL Big Brothers Big Sisters

YPGP Program:

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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Illinois Proposed Graduated Income Tax Amendment

What is it?

- The **Illinois Allow for Graduated Income Tax Amendment** is on the ballot in Illinois as a legislatively referred constitutional amendment on **November 3, 2020**.
- The ballot measure would **repeal** the state's constitutional requirement that the state's personal income tax is a **flat rate across income**. Instead, the ballot measure would allow the state to enact legislation for a graduated income tax. In June 2019, Gov. J.B. Pritzker (D) signed SB 687, which would enact a graduated income tax if voters approve the ballot measure. SB 687 would change the state's income tax from a flat rate to six graduated rates beginning on **January 1, 2021**.

Why are we voting on this referendum?

- The Illinois Constitution lays out the rules for how an amendment introduced in the Legislature can be adopted. To become part of the constitution, a proposed amendment must be approved by either 60% of those voting on the question or a majority of those voting in the election.

Who stands to benefit?

- The money generated from the tax will help pay off the state's bill backlog which stood at \$6.29 billion on Jan. 3 & some middle and low-income taxpayers will see some savings.

History of Income Tax in Illinois

- Illinois has collected individual income tax since 1969, when the tax rate was 2.5%.
- As of 2019, **43 states** levied a tax on personal income. Of these 43 states, **11 states, including Illinois, had a flat income tax rate**, meaning there is a constant rate across income before deductions and exemptions. In Illinois, income is taxed at a flat rate of **4.95%**. The flat income tax rates ranged from 2.00% in Tennessee to 5.25% in North Carolina. **Most (32 of 50) states had a graduated income tax**, with different rates applied to different levels of income. Under Illinois SB 687, the proposed tax rates would range from **4.75% to 7.99%**. Compared to 2019 tax rates, **Illinois would have the sixth-highest top-bracket rate**. The state with the highest top-bracket rate—and the largest difference between the bottom and top rates—is California, where the bottom rate is 1.00% and the top rate is 13.30%.
- The measure would amend Section 3 of Article IX of the Illinois Constitution. The following underlined text would be added and ~~struck through~~ text would be deleted: **(a) A tax on or measured by income shall be at a non-graduated rate. At any one time there may be no more than one such tax imposed by the State for State purposes on individuals and one such tax so imposed on corporations. The General Assembly shall provide by law for the rate or rates of any tax on or measured by income imposed by the State. In any such tax imposed upon corporations the highest rate shall not exceed the highest rate imposed on individuals by more than a ratio of 8 to 5. (b) Laws imposing taxes on or measured by income may adopt by reference provisions of the laws and regulations of the United States, as they then exist or thereafter may be changed, for the purpose of arriving at the amount of income upon which the tax is imposed**

Provided Arguments:

- **PRO:** House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-22): "Middle-class families bear too much of the burden under the current tax system, and a Fair Tax will enable us to make the wealthy pay their fair share to balance the budget and invest in critical resources like education and health care — all while providing relief for 97% of taxpayers."

- **PRO:** Trisha Crowley, president of the League of Women Voters of Champaign County: "In Illinois, the bottom 20% of wage earners currently pay almost twice as much of their total income for state and local taxes as the top 20%. This is an unjust burden on our poorest residents. As the income gap between rich and poor in the US continues to grow, taxing our highest earners at a rate proportionate to their increasing concentration of income growth could also make a real difference in addressing the state's well-known fiscal crisis. The proposed amendment will not itself change the current rates, but it will allow for them to be graduated. "Illinois' current tax system unfairly benefits millionaires and billionaires and this amendment will set things right for middle-class and working people. Currently, it is unfair that billionaires pay the same tax rate as regular people. Voting "yes" on the amendment means that the State will enact a new tax structure where only those making above \$250,000 a year will see their taxes go up. This amendment is simply upgrading Illinois' old tax system to a graduated system which is how the federal government and the majority of other states do it."
- **CON:** Illinois Chamber of Commerce: The Illinois Chamber of Commerce released a statement opposing the graduated income tax amendment, which included, "Illinois' current flat rate income tax is inherently more fair than a graduated income tax since everyone pays the same rate and tax increases uniformly impact everyone. A flat rate tax does not promote divisive class warfare rhetoric or purposefully attempt to re-distribute income according to a subjective fairness standard. A flat rate tax requires all taxpayers to vigilantly stand guard against excessive government spending."
- **CON:** Sen. Paul Schimpf (R-58): "Today's Senate action continues to ignore the reality that Illinois politicians have an insatiable desire to spend more money and expand the size of government. Changing our taxing structure, without providing a means to limit spending or make it more difficult to raise taxes in the future, solves nothing. In fact, this plan will most likely only lead to more tax increases and higher spending in the future."

More Information:

- The specific progressive income tax Gov. J.B. Pritzker has proposed would raise taxes only on people who earn \$250,000 or more a year — incomes between \$250,000 and \$500,000 would be taxed at 7.75%. It would maintain the current tax rate of 4.95% on incomes between \$100,000 and \$250,000. And it would reduce the rate on incomes of \$100,000 or less. Income from \$500,000 to \$1 million would be taxed 7.85% and income over \$1 million would be taxed 7.99%. The corporate tax rate within the package would also be raised to 7.99%.
- Voters will not be voting on the specific taxes rates or brackets, but rather, on amending the Illinois Constitution to allow for such a system to be implemented. Currently, the Illinois State Constitution requires that taxes based on income must be levied at non-graduated rates.
- Democrats have said the new personal income tax rates would bring in \$3.57 billion, and the new corporate tax rate would bring in \$350 million.
- The current income tax levied on all taxpayers is 4.95%. The flat tax rate, which has fluctuated over the years, has been part of the Illinois constitution since 1970, a year after income tax was first enacted in Illinois. With a constitutional change, the Pritzker administration estimates that 97% of Illinois residents will see at least a modest decrease in their income taxes.



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