

CENTENNIAL

THE SPRINGFIELD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 100TH ANNIVERSARY

**CELEBRATING
100 YEARS**

**AS A TRUSTED
CONVENER AND
LEADING CATALYST.**

A few dedicated nurses in 1906. Over 12,000 caring employees today.

114 years of giving, community and health.



A lot has changed since Thanksgiving Day in 1906 and the generous donation by Ellen Burge that started it all. But one thing has remained constant – our unwavering commitment to the health and wellness of the communities we serve. Congratulations to the Chamber on your historic milestone. We're looking forward to another century of partnership and leadership in this thriving community we call home.

coxhealth.com
CoxHealthNow app





1919 // 2019

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION



Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce
 202 S. John Q Hammons Pkwy.
 Springfield | 417-862-5567
 springfieldchamber.com

JEFF CHILDS
 2019 CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
 MESSAGE ON P. 4

ROBIN ROBESON
 2020 CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
 MESSAGE ON P. 43

MATT MORROW
 PRESIDENT
 MESSAGE ON P. 2

WRITERS



TOM CARLSON
 Tom Carlson is a life long resident of Springfield. He has worked as a reporter, practiced law, and developed real estate. Along the way, he served as mayor of Springfield for 14 years. He and his wife Chandler of 46 years enjoy their grandkids and are grateful for all their friends in Springfield.



KAITLYN MCCONNELL
 Kaitlyn McConnell is an Ozarks native who has spent much of her life sharing stories of the region. She is the founder of Ozarks Alive, a web presence dedicated to the preservation of local history and culture, and is a member of Springfield's Landmarks Board. She has also published two books: *Marshfield*, a pictorial history of the town, and *Passport to the Ozarks*, a guidebook featuring 61 unique places to visit and experience throughout the region. Professionally, she is employed at CoxHealth, where she works as the system's media relations manager.



ETTIE BERNEKING
 Ettie Berneking is a freelance writer who has written about Springfield and the Ozarks for several local, state and national publications. She served as project manager and editor for the chamber's centennial publication.

417 MAGAZINE

2111 S. Eastgate Ave., Springfield

ETTIE BERNEKING
 PROJECT MANAGER

GARY WHITAKER
 PUBLISHER

KATIE POLLOCK ESTES
 EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

LOGAN AGUIRRE
 PRESIDENT/ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

PAIJE LUTH
 ART DIRECTOR

MEGAN JOHNSON
 VP OF CUSTOM PUBLICATIONS

MICAH BARTZ
 ADVERTISING DESIGNER

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
 BRANDON ALMS, BRAD ZWEERINK

ON THE COVER

To capture the energy, spirit and future of the chamber, we rounded up Daniel Ogunyemi, who serves on the Network Leadership Council, and Brad Erwin and Rita Baron who are both chamber board members.

CONTENTS

C CHAMBER NOTES

Reflect Back & Face Forward

- 8 OVER THE YEARS
- 10 LEADING THE CHARGE
- 12 CELEBRATING DIVERSITY
- 15 COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP VISITS

L LEADERSHIP

Business Leader Profiles

- 18 JIM ANDERSON
- 22 JOHN OKE-THOMAS
- 24 JOHN T. WOODRUFF
- 26 LOGAN AGUIRRE AND DEBBIE SHANTZ HART
- 28 ANN MARIE BAKER
- 30 JOHN Q. HAMMONS
- 32 BILL TURNER

B BUSINESS

Business Profiles

- 36 O'REILLY AUTO PARTS
- 38 PAUL MUELLER COMPANY
- 40 THE BKD WAY

L LOOKING AHEAD

Celebrating 100 Years and More to Come

- 43 2020 CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE
- 44 THE NETWORK LOOKS AHEAD
- 46 BY THE NUMBERS



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MATT MORROW

How do you tell the story of an organization that spans a century? We grappled with that challenge for quite some time. We knew it needed to be more than just a chronological timeline, but we weren't sure how to give it greater dimension.

Then, a unique solution presented itself in the form of two talented writers who are just as passionate about the history of our community and the people who've shaped it as we are at the chamber. Tom Carlson and Kaitlyn McConnell approached us with the idea of telling the chamber's story through the profiles of business leaders and companies that represent the entrepreneurship and innovation that have fueled a century of growth and success in Springfield.

Their collaborative spirit and natural gift for storytelling catalyzed this publication. They understood the chamber's story is comprised of the stories of many people who dared to envision the future and took the risks needed to increase economic opportunities and improve our community.

This is a very small booklet. We could never profile all the wonderful folks who contributed so much over the past 100 years; we wish we could. And while we can only offer a glimpse here of the articles we do have, in a heavily abridged form, the full stories can be found online at springfieldchamber.com/centennial. Tom and Kaitlyn did an incredible job of capturing significant moments in time that provide great insight into the history of the chamber, our community and the characteristics of those who've been at the forefront of our work to grow jobs, our workforce and investment in the region.

I hope you enjoy these wonderful stories and profiles as much as I have. We are so grateful to Tom and Kaitlyn for volunteering their time to produce them. It was a labor of love. This duo, along with our sponsors, made it possible for us to create this centennial publication and preserve these perspectives of the chamber's century of leadership.

WHAT'S ONLINE

TO READ THE FULL STORIES OF THE PROFILES INCLUDED IN THIS PUBLICATION, HEAD ONLINE TO [SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL](http://springfieldchamber.com/centennial).



Inclined to help.

Your team pushes hard to get the job done, but a little boost never hurts when challenges get steep. When accounting horsepower is what's missing, get a leg up from a firm with 97 years of experience to help propel you past obstacles and toward your goals.

Everyone needs a trusted advisor.
Who's yours?

BKD
CPAs & Advisors

2019 CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

JEFF CHILDS

What does it take for an organization to last for a century? I've thought a lot about why the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce is still here after 100 years. There are many reasons, of course, but several rise to the top of the list for me.

OUR MEMBERS

You can't have a chamber without members, and those members need to believe in more than just investing in their own business. They know there's strength in numbers and that supporting the chamber helps focus the collective energy of the business community in a way that increases economic opportunity for everyone. It is also an investment in the future; we want this to be a place where all our children and grandchildren can thrive and prosper. Our members are the innovators, visionaries, risk-takers and job-creators. I know first-hand that this chamber is built on practices that ensure our plans and positions are member-driven. And I know that's what it takes to stick around for 100 years.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are empowered to lead this chamber, and the staff equips them with the tools and data necessary to get the job done. I've experienced this so many times as a chamber board member. Whether it was talking to legislators in Jefferson City about the importance of workforce development, or studying best practices in a peer city, it is a privilege to work in partnership with others to make this a better place for all our citizens to live, work, play and learn.

OUR VALUES

Our chamber is the trusted convener. We bring people and organizations together to collaborate on solutions to spur action that propels us forward. The chamber is an inclusive engager. Our leaders understand that we can't start the work until everyone is at the table. We take responsibility. We gather data and function as the astute analyst. We help facilitate and support catalytic leadership and projects. I'll never be able to fully express the privilege that it's been to serve as the Chairman of the Board during this centennial year. To the members and volunteers from the past 100 years, and to those who follow over the next 100 years, thank you. Your investment and your work matter. You make a difference.





Springfield
Area Chamber of Commerce

1919 // 2019

CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION



Thank you to the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, volunteers and staff for an incredible year. So grateful for your support, dedication and most of all, your friendship.

Alexis and Jeff Childs

There's Strength in Numbers

A medical plan that lets small businesses join together for more plan options and lower rates



Say hello to the Chamber Benefit Plan.

A multiple employer welfare arrangement (MEWA) designed for small businesses who are members of a qualified Chamber of Commerce, like ours.

When it comes to providing employees with cost-saving health care coverage, small businesses are at a big disadvantage compared to their larger counterparts. Because of their smaller size, their claims risk pool is spread out across a much smaller employee population. That can result in higher, less stable insurance rates — and fewer viable plan choices.

Fortunately, there's a simple and affordable medical plan alternative. It's called the Chamber Benefit Plan and it's just one of the many advantages of joining our chamber.

Powered by the Missouri Chamber Federation and administered by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, the Chamber Benefit Plan is available to small group employers in Missouri who have 2 to 50 eligible employees.

Advantages that make a real difference:

- › Shared overall claims risk across a large pool
- › Competitive, medically underwritten rates
- › Fixed, predictable monthly payments
- › Choose from a variety of plan designs, including 10 PPO and three HSA options
- › Minimize the impact of ACA mandates while offering coverage to all eligible applicants, regardless of health status
- › Anthem's Blue Access, Blue Access Choice and Blue Preferred networks
- › Coverage for claims run-out/terminal liability coverage
- › Simple, streamlined administration

Not a member of our chamber yet? We'll help you join today!

Chamber members have access to a full range of high-quality plans and options that can lead to significant savings.
Contact us today to learn more.



417-862-5567

Visit www.springfieldchamber.com/insurance to learn more.



CHAMBER NOTES

REFLECT BACK & FACE FORWARD



Photo courtesy The Network

8
OVER THE YEARS

10
LEADING THE CHARGE

12
CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

14
LEADERSHIP VISITS

WHAT'S ONLINE

TO READ THE FULL STORIES OF THE PROFILES INCLUDED IN THIS PUBLICATION, HEAD ONLINE TO SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL.

Members of The Network gather monthly to plug into local issues and business development opportunities.



CHAMBER NOTES

Reflect Back & Face Forward

GROWTH SPURT

The Queen City has greatly changed since the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce's inception 100 years ago. Here's a look back at how the Chamber helped shape and bring growth to Springfield.

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Since its very start, Springfield's story has been one of progress, growth and change. It has grown from being a frontier town to a city of corporate headquarters, and it's set to enter a new chapter of change once again. The Queen City has been continually recreated by those who have called her home. "The key word in all of Springfield's history has been crossroads," says John Sellars, the executive director of History Museum on the Square. "We have always been at the center of travel and activities in the southwest corner of Missouri. From the very first Native American trails to the highways and railroad tracks crossing this great country, they always seem to pass through Springfield."

One of Springfield's first residents was John Polk Campbell. In the early 1820s, Campbell came West from Tennessee in search of land. After claiming a spot near a water source by marking his name on a tree near today's Founder's Park, Campbell headed back to Tennessee to gather his family. "As the settlement grew, the opportunity to become the county seat presented itself," Sellars says. Campbell donated 50 acres of his land, and the center of a new city was established.

In 1838, the town was officially incorporated and boasted a population of about 250 people. For nearly 200 years, the city has grown and developed. It's become a hub and headquarters

1928

SPRINGFIELD PARK AND AIRPORT

In 1928, the chamber led a new initiative to start a municipal airport. Springfield Park and Airport opened on May 14, 1928, under the jurisdiction of the Springfield Park Board. The collaboration quickly paid off. By 1929, commercial air service was underway on a regular basis.

1950

LILY-TULIP CORPORATION

For decades, the Frisco Railway was headquartered in Springfield and was easily the city's largest employer. But as steam engines faded, many needed new work. An industrial revolution came in 1950 when the chamber announced that a new manufacturer was coming to town: Lily-Tulip Corporation—the nation's largest producer of paper cups.

1966

ZENITH RADIO CORPORATION

The biggest industrial development came in 1966 when Zenith Radio Corporation executives, alongside the chamber, announced plans to break ground on a \$10 million plant on east Kearney Street that would employ 4,000 people. Less than a year after Zenith's plans were announced, Frisco's last passenger train left the Springfield station, which signaled the end of an era.

1983

START OF THE SBDC

In 1983, the chamber launched the Springfield Business Development Corporation to conduct research, develop literature, carry out promotions and recruit new industry. The program focused on identifying Springfield's strengths and weaknesses as well as types of businesses the chamber should attract to town. The effort proved successful. SBDC is still active and leaving a lasting impact on Springfield's economic scene.

1937

OZARK EMPIRE DISTRICT FREE FAIR

In 1937, another long-held dream came to reality with the launch of the Ozark Empire District Free Fair. Two longtime chamber advocates, John T. Woodruff and Louis Reys, helped spur the launch of the fair. More than 80 years later, the fair is still a gathering place.

1953

KRAFT ANNOUNCES IT'S COMING TO TOWN

Another major development came when Kraft announced plans to expand its milk processing plant and to "erect one of America's finest cheese plants" in Springfield in 1953.

1972

R.T. FRENCH COMPANY

R.T. French Company announced plans to build a \$12.7 million plant and employ 350 near the Highway 65 and Interstate 44 interchange.

1979

THE CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU OPENS

The CVB was the hospitality arm of the chamber until 1989 when it was independently incorporated.

1984

CREATION OF LEADERSHIP SPRINGFIELD

Community partners including the chamber launch the local leadership development organization. Formed separately with its own board, it is managed as an affiliate of the chamber until 2018 when it transitions to full operational independence with its own staff.



of international industries. It is the result of the joining of two towns—Springfield and North Springfield. It’s the birthplace of Route 66, and it was home to a nationally known TV show that made Springfield one of the country’s top three originators of live television. For nearly half of the city’s existence, the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce has been part of guiding that growth and development.

While Springfield got its start in the 1800s, the chamber didn’t arrive on the scene until 1919. It wasn’t the first time a collaborative business organization began in Springfield. One of its predecessors was the Springfield Club, an organization whose “dominating purpose (was)

the betterment and upbuilding of the Queen City,” according to a 1910 Springfield newspaper article. The organization helped bring many industries to town, including the Friso Railway and the State Normal School (today’s Missouri State University).

In 1919, business was seemingly booming in Springfield. World War I had just ended; the suffrage movement prevailed and women won the right to vote; and according to *Springfield of the Ozarks*, a book about the city’s history, Springfield was dubbed the largest horse and mule market in the world during this time. With the growth of Springfield’s business community taking off, the chamber hit the ground

running. By the end of the year, the chamber’s work rounded up enough enthusiasm that many leaders saw the potential for even greater value and offered more support to the organization. Now 100 years since the start of Springfield’s chamber, the city has seen significant growth, change, challenges and success. The chamber’s role in the city’s growth has also evolved and expanded, and as the city continues to change, the chamber will be there by its side to facilitate leadership, direction and support for continued success in and around Springfield.

1992

PARTNERSHIP INDUSTRIAL CENTER

One of the biggest advances for Springfield came in 1992 with the introduction of the city’s first major industrial park. The public-private partnership was a new concept in Springfield. By January 1994, the park had a commitment from its first resident: Contico International, a manufacturing company which promised to bring around 300 jobs to Springfield.

2012

CHAMBER OF THE YEAR

In 2012, the chamber’s work was recognized on a national level when it was selected as Chamber of the Year by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives.

2016

REACH CAMPAIGN

The chamber conducted its inaugural REACH campaign—a volunteer-driven initiative that allows members to align marketing goals with Chamber sponsorship opportunities.

2017

TRUSTED CONVENER

The chamber successfully mediated contentious lawsuits between the City of Springfield and Greene County over access to jail space for municipal offenders.

1996

CHAMBER MOVES TO A NEW HOME

In 1996, the chamber moved to its new home at the \$2 million John Q. Hammons Enterprise Center.

2014

TALENT ATTRACTION

SBDC launched the talent attraction initiative featuring resources that complement employer recruitment in Springfield. As part of the initiative, the SBDC launched the website LiveInSpringfieldMO.com.

2017

VISIONING FOR FUTURE GROWTH

The chamber convened business and community leaders to identify a clear, unifying and aligned effort for a growing and robust Springfield. The effort served as a catalyst for the eventual launch of Springfield’s first new comprehensive planning effort in 20 years.

2019

SUCCESS AT THE POLLS

Through affiliate Committee for the Future, the 32nd issue campaign is managed successfully with passage of the city’s ¼-cent Capital Improvements Sales Tax

2007

CREATION OF THE NETWORK

Formed by the chamber in 2007, the Network for young professionals is a model to help recruit and retain aspiring members of Springfield’s workforce.



LEADING THE CHARGE

Women didn't always have a seat at the chamber, but as soon as they were welcomed in, women played a varied and important role in Springfield's development.

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

If you look at the role of women at the chamber today, there's no doubt they play a major part in the growth and development of Springfield's business community. But back in the '50s women were just beginning to pull up a seat at the table, and it started with the chamber's Women's Division. For more than 30 years, the Women's Division represented the majority of female participation in chamber activities. In a day and age when women were not a major part of the workforce, the division served as a way for them to have their voices heard in the business community.

START OF THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

When the Women's Division first began, it was 1957, and the group's focus was more social than strategic. The division was primarily comprised of women representatives who worked for chamber-member companies. "It helped with recruiting chamber members," says Jerry Clark Quinn, former vice president of Public Affairs at the chamber. "Usually, the member was the head of the company, and the executive secretary or similar position would represent them on the Women's Division."

According to a 1988 article in *Springfield Spirit*, the chamber's monthly publication, the group's first significant task was to serve as hostesses for chamber banquets. "This included selecting a site, menu and decorating," wrote the *Spirit*. "The other important activity that first year was recruiting new members. They tried to get each business that was a member of the chamber to send a representative to join the Women's Division."



▲ Nikki Sellis (right) was the first woman to serve as Chairman of the Board for the chamber. The role of women at the chamber has changed drastically. In the early days, women only served on the Women's Division, which began in 1957 and helped plan chamber events.

Recruitment worked, and the membership steadily grew. The original group, comprised of 13 members, surged to approximately 350 by the mid-1970s. Eventually, membership opened up to women who were not employed by businesses represented at the chamber.

ANNUAL EVENTS

In addition to planning and hosting events, members soon saw a variety of "development" opportunities through seminars and luncheons. One example was "Homemaker's Holiday," an annual event sponsored by the division for nearly 15 years. "It was a day away from life's ordinary ebb and flow for women who were slowly trickling into the workforce but who primarily thought of themselves as homemakers," noted the *Leader and Press* in 1985.

The annual event brought in guest speakers on topics including "Short Cuts in the Kitchen," "A Minute Saved is a Minute Earned," and "It'll All Come Out in the Wash." Other elements of the annual event included fashion shows and tips for food preparation. The event quickly grew in popularity. By 1974, a Springfield newspaper article noted that between 700 and 1,000 people regularly attended the event, but times were beginning to change, and the Women's Division changed with them. The "Homemakers Holiday" was discontinued by the mid-1970s,

and more emphasis was placed on another long-time event hosted by the division: The Working Women's Seminar.

Originally known as the Office Worker's Seminar, the annual event had started years earlier in 1959 and catered more to business-women. Seminar topics included "Effective Listening," "Office Teamwork," "Exercise and Physical Fitness for the Office Worker" and "Grooming, Poise and Women's Place in Business." By the 1980s, topics turned to "Creating a Business Impression," "Body Language" and "Legal Status of Women in the '80s."

CONTINUING CHANGE

Shortly after celebrating its 30th anniversary in 1988, the Women's Division was dissolved and became known as the Professional Development Committee, which opened the door for women interested in belonging to the chamber as regular members. That decision made way for other changes, and in 1992, the chamber ended its "Woman Who Made the Difference" award. In its place, women could be selected for the Springfieldian award. The same year, Mary Kay Meek became the first female recipient of that top honor.

The day after her award, the *Springfield News-Leader* voiced its support through its editorial page and wrote, "Finally. Springfield

Photos courtesy Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Voices in the Crowd

When asked by reporters in 1974 why they joined the Women's Division, these women had their answers ready.



Mary Kay Meek was the first woman to win the Springfieldian award.

has recognized the work of a woman with the Chamber of Commerce's Springfieldian of the Year for 1992. Mary Kay Meek is a splendid choice. Those who made the selection are to be congratulated for their choice. Not because the recipient is a woman but because she was the most deserving nominee."

The following years saw much more change in the chamber with regard to women. In 1998, after nearly 70 years in existence, the chamber welcomed its first female chair as Nikki Sells moved into the role. Sells had been involved in the chamber for several years before being selected as chair. She and her husband, Robert, moved to Springfield in 1990 and opened Express Personnel Services. While she became involved in the chamber, she never joined the Professional Development Committee.

"Not because I didn't want to support the other women, but because I understood that if women were going to make a difference, we needed to be sitting on committees with the men who were making the decisions as equals," Sells says, "not off in some room being 'professionally developed,' whatever that meant." Instead, Sells worked on her own professional development by chairing the Chamber Ambassadors, engaging politically with bond issue campaigns, fundraising for the chamber's current home and serving on the Chamber Executive Committee.

"Looking back, I think it was a big deal, and long overdue," she says. "There had been many women who could have easily been chairman before me and who were more than qualified! I'm a big believer that timing is everything."

As chair, Sells' top priorities included economic development and support for small businesses like her own. "Economic development was always at the forefront for me," she recalls. "Back then, Springfield was a city made up of 90% small businesses, each under 20 employees. It was important that we recruited some larger companies for balance and economic health." Sells finished her time as chair at the end of 1998—around the same time the final Working Women's Seminar was held. Over the next decade-and-a-half, three other women have served as chair—Mary Kay Meek, Ann Marie Baker and Debra Shantz Hart.

Shantz Hart actually served on the chamber board two separate times, which meant she saw considerable change when it came to women's roles in the chamber. "I saw a dramatic increase in the presence of women both on the board and in leadership roles," she recalls. "During my first tenure on the board, I think there were only three or four women on the board. When I joined the board again in 2009... nearly half of the board was women."



Debra Shantz Hart was the fourth woman chair of the board.

While chair of the board, Shantz Hart led efforts tied to overall Springfield betterment, and she worked to ensure women and minorities were set up for continued involvement in the chamber. "As to gender equality, I wanted the board and leadership to reflect the mix of workers in our community," she says. "I think we did. My hopes for the chamber would be that we continue to strive to have a board that represents our workforce in race, gender and age and with representation of large and small businesses."

"I HOPED TO IMPROVE MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMMUNITY, TO ENHANCE MYSELF AS A WOMAN, AND TO PROMOTE MY EMPLOYER."

—secretary-bookkeeper

"TO BE BETTER INFORMED ON WHAT IS GOING ON IN OUR CITY AND, IF POSSIBLE, TO TAKE PART IN ITS CHANGES."

—processing engineer

"I WANTED GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND FUNCTIONS, AND WAYS AND MEANS OF ASSISTING IN ITS BETTERMENT."

—secretary

"TO KNOW MISSOURI AND TO KNOW SPRINGFIELD AS A CITY. TO LEARN FROM ITS PEOPLE AND TO PASS ALONG THIS KNOWLEDGE TO OTHERS. TO HELP MAKE THIS A NICE PLACE TO LIVE AND RAISE CHILDREN."

—homemaker

HEAD ONLINE

TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION, HEAD TO SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

While many aspects of Springfield’s history positively shine, there are others that are shades of less-than-ideal to downright horrific. These situations offer opportunities to grow, change and evolve to serve the community and its people. One example is diversity.

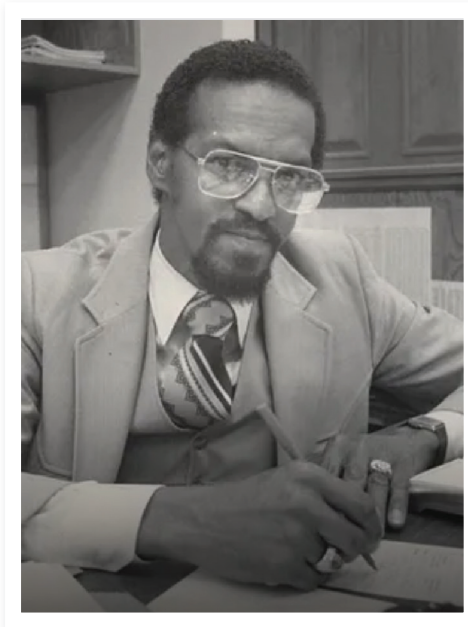
BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

Diversity can mean many things to many people. It can be tied to gender, sexuality, race or age, but most often, when talking about diversity in the workplace, the conversation centers around race. Denny Whyne knows this conversation well. The 74-year-old former city councilman has spent the majority of his life here in Springfield and has witnessed dramatic changes over the years. Some of those changes have been good, some of them are ongoing, and some of them have yet to take place.

“A lot of companies would like to come to Springfield,” Whyne says, “but they see there’s not a lot of diversity. So they choose not to come here.” That’s where Whyne sees an area of opportunity where the city can keep improving, and he’s optimistic Springfield is headed in the right direction. One example Whyne points to is the recent hires of Maurice Jones as Springfield deputy city manager and Dr. Angela Holloway Payne as principal of Boyd Elementary School, and the election of Abe McGull as a Springfield City Councilman.

Those additions, as well as his own election to Springfield city council in 1998, signify great change from when Whyne was growing up in Springfield in the 1940s and ’50s. Back then, Whyne says he wasn’t even allowed to attend the same school as white children in his neighborhood. “The kids knew one another,” Whyne says. “Kids played together, you just couldn’t go to school together.”

For his first part of his education, Whyne attended Lincoln School, a facility that today is part of the campus at Ozarks Technical Community College. It wasn’t until 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court decreed that separate wasn’t equal in its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, that schools were integrated across the country.



◀ Denny Whyne was a long-time community leader in Springfield. He was elected to city council in 1998.

“**Things change.
People change.
People change
things.”**

—Denny Whyne

In Springfield, Whyne says, the transition was swift, and he soon began attending Boyd Elementary. “I was the first black pupil to enroll in Springfield Public Schools,” he says. But that doesn’t mean racial issues were non-existent. While Whyne was in middle school, the chamber’s Civic Affairs committee, headed by Rev. Thomas Zimmerman, who eventually served as superintendent of the Assemblies of God, launched a study of local race relations. The group made inquiries at local restaurants, motels, hotels and theaters, to see which ones would serve African-American patrons. In 1958, the final report painted a very sad picture.

“Most of our inquiries were made via telephone and spread out over a period of time, which we felt would be sufficient to avoid arousing any undue suspicion that an integration move was underway... Each establishment was asked one of the following questions: ‘Do you serve colored people in your restaurant?’ ‘May colored people stay in your hotel?’ ‘May colored people attend your theatre?’ ‘May colored people stay in your motel?’”

Out of 116 restaurants contacted, 76 would not serve African-Americans at all. Eleven would only serve them in certain instances, such as in the kitchen. Two drive-in theaters allowed African-Americans to patronize their establishments; the Landers had a “colored” balcony open on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Only two out of 22 lodging options would allow African-American guests.

In addition to hard data, the chamber committee members shared sentiments in the report:

“We feel that the findings of our study are shameful for a city which boasts of its many churches and Christian atmosphere, and which takes such pride in the display of its having been chosen as one of the few ‘All-American’ cities... If we, the members of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, wish to make our city a truly All-American city, abiding by the spirit and letter of our nation’s constitution, we will not wait until we are required by a decision handed down by the highest court of our land—we will open all of our privately-owned public places to all of our nation’s public.”

Despite this sentiment, major change didn’t come to Springfield until 1960, when then-vice president Richard Nixon planned a visit. The visit was part of Nixon’s campaign for president, and it quickly grew in scope and

Photos courtesy Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Springfield News-Leader/USA TODAY Network



CHAMBER NOTES

Reflect Back & Face Forward



▲ Del Caywood was a community leader in the 1960s and was the Republican county chairman.

size. Five bands would perform along Nixon’s route through Springfield; all local Republican organizations were involved, and eventually, the president would arrive at the Kentwood Arms Hotel, where he was scheduled to stay.

It was a big honor for Springfield, but it almost didn’t happen. The visit was almost canceled when Nixon threatened to skip the city if two African-American reporters traveling with him weren’t allowed to stay at the then-segregated hotel. The hotel made an exception for the two reporters, but the local NAACP began planning a protest to coincide with Nixon’s arrival. Wayne says that it didn’t seem fair for an exception to be made.

“Del Caywood kind of got wind that we were going to picket,” Wayne says. At the time, Caywood was a community leader and was the Republican county chairman. “So he called a meeting with the city fathers, explaining what was going to possibly happen and that it could give Springfield a black eye.”

Things came to a head on Sept. 19, 1960, two days before Nixon’s visit. That night, a “capacity crowd” attended the Springfield City Council meeting to support the establishment of the Mayor’s Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations, which still exists today. Faced with Nixon’s impending visit, demands for a Human Rights commission and a possible demonstration, several of Springfield’s key businesses integrated overnight.

The day before Nixon’s scheduled visit, the headline that was splashed on the front page of

the *Springfield Daily News* read, “Kentwood Arms, Heer’s ending segregation.” Within the next couple of days, many other businesses affirmed commitment to integration. The newspaper noted that the list, as of that day, included the Kentwood Arms Hotel, Heer’s, Inc., Springfield National Theaters, Crank Drug Company, the Colonial Hotel, Woolworth’s and Kresge’s, Colonial Dinner House, Arrowhead Restaurant and Davidson’s Cafeteria.

Landon Smith, then-president of the NAACP, voiced his appreciation in the newspaper: “It is only through the efforts of men of vision and integrity that this problem of discrimination and segregation may be abolished.”

In the papers, change seemed to be happening, but in reality, change has been slow for Springfield. One thing Wayne says has slowed the pace of change is the amount of diversity in the city, which is why much of his career was focused on hearing the voices of Springfield’s minority residents.

In 1998, Wayne ran and was elected city councilor of Zone 1, and was Springfield’s first African-American city council member since the late 1800s. “The first thing I’m going to do is go back into the neighborhood and listen to what [people] have to say,” he told a Springfield

▼ Wayne led many community improvements including adding the Jefferson Ave. footbridge to the list of historical sites.



newspaper reporter after his election. Wayne was re-elected in 2005. And while he worked to benefit the whole of the community, he also looked for ways to increase diversity on city boards and commissions.

“When I got elected to city council in 2001, I was on the public involvement committee,” he says. “It appointed people to different committees, so I began to appoint some African-Americans. That brought about a change. They began to see as I did, how the community really operated. You had to be at the table.”

Wayne retired from city council in 2009. Looking back, as well as to the future, the thing he believes Springfield can do to improve its diversity is conscientious employment. “Employment is the key,” he says. “Seeing is believing, especially for the young generation. If they see role models, then they might want to stay here.”

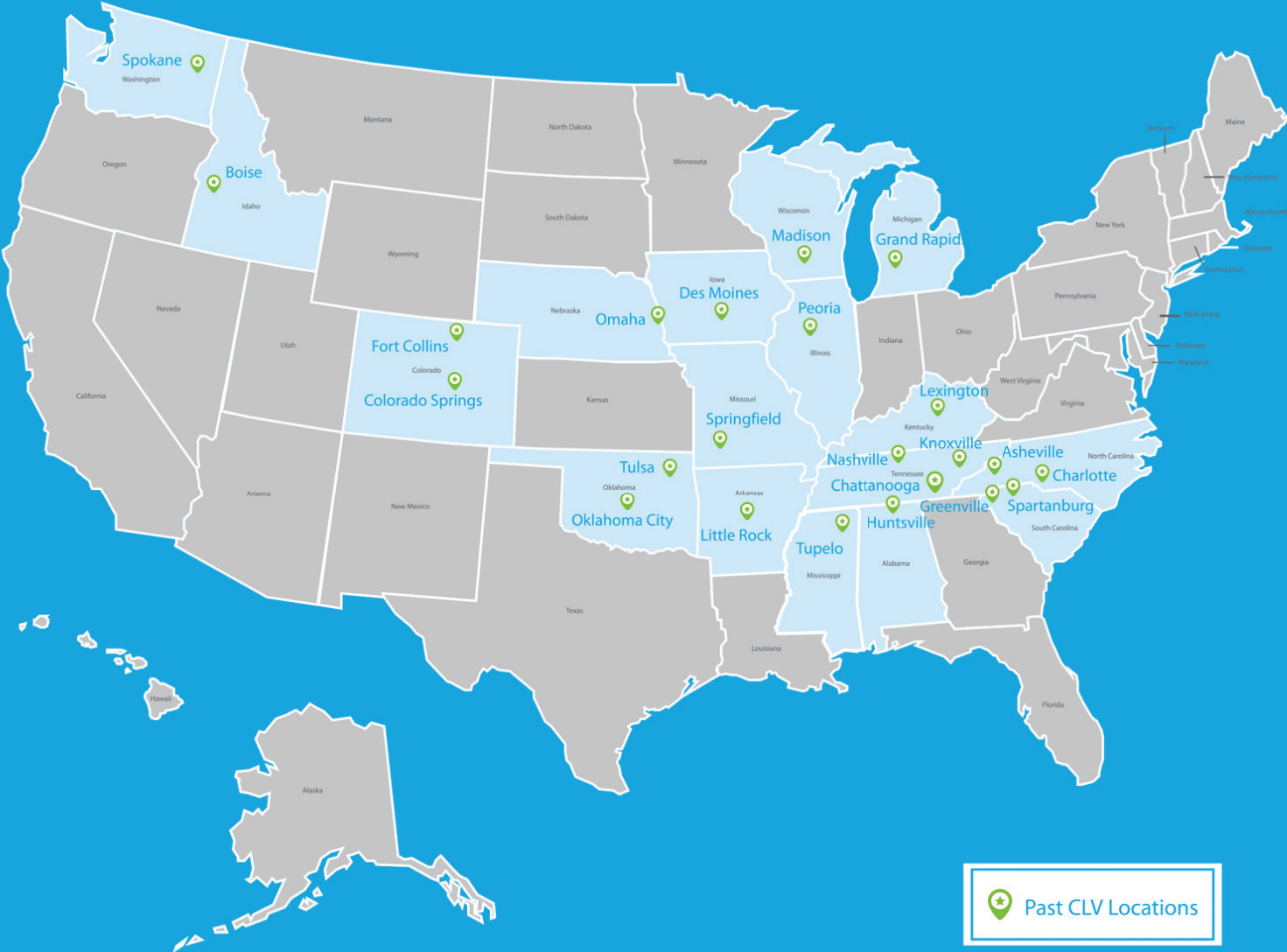
For the chamber, encouraging diversity in the community is a priority. The chamber brought the Facing Racism institute from Grand Rapids, Michigan, to town after the Community Leadership Visit there in 2009. The chamber supports that program in partnership with MSU’s Division of Diversity & Inclusion and also supports the MSU/DDI Collaborative Diversity Conference and Minorities in Business.

Other chamber initiatives including The Network, a young professionals networking group, and the chamber’s Talent Attraction Initiative (LiveInSpringfieldMo.com) were designed to promote diversity and inclusion. The chamber’s commitment to diversity is also found through chamber leadership including the work the organization put in to form the Public Entities Diversity Initiative.

Such efforts are an important factor as the Springfield area continues to grow, and Wayne says the city is on the right track. He warns against assuming there isn’t work to do today simply because nothing seems wrong on the surface. “I have a saying I keep in my pocket,” he says. “Things change. People change. People change things.” With the hope and trust that Springfield will continue to embrace diversity, Wayne says he encourages other minorities to make Springfield their home. “Come and help make it better,” he says.

HEAD ONLINE
.....
TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION,
HEAD TO [SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL](http://SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL).

LEADERSHIP VISIT LOCALES



“The Community Leadership Visits, now spanning 26 years, have been the catalysts for several of the most positive and significant changes for our region.”

Jim Anderson, Retired President
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce



LOOKING BACK

Twenty six years of community leadership visits

From Washington to Wisconsin the chamber's Community Leadership Visit has crossed the country to learn about the best practices of our peer cities. The scope of the trip has changed over the past two-plus decades, but the core focus has always remained the same. Bring together Springfield leaders from all sectors of the community to connect with each other, look at what others are doing well and where they have struggled, find out how we can improve ourselves and reaffirm what we are doing well.

"Some organizations only react to change. The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce creates change," said former Chamber President Jim Anderson. "The Community Leadership Visits, now spanning 26 years, have been the catalysts for several of the most positive and significant changes for our region."

One of the most amazing aspects of these visits is that many of the same themes continue to appear regardless of the setting. Here, in no particular order, are some of the biggest themes.

- Cooperation and partnerships are key to success. Nearly every city we have visited has pointed to the importance of collaboration between public and private sectors, with the not-for-profit and philanthropic community and between business and education. Success is nearly impossible without working together.

- Successful development goes beyond the city limits. Many cities, including Boise, Spokane, Charlotte and Little Rock, have drawn significant success from the fact that they aren't limited by their city limits. Success of the region lifts everyone.

- Embrace the outdoors. Several of the cities we've visited have made a concerted effort to capitalize on their natural beauty and use it to enhance quality of life, both for residents and for visitors.

- Find yourself. Thriving cities have found a way to develop a unique, positive identity. And everyone in their city shares the message.

- Start in the center. A strong building has a strong core, and so does a strong city. Over and over again, the cities we visit have stressed the importance of revitalizing the city center as a catalyst for the rest of the region.

- Retain, attract and develop talent. The chamber added workforce development as a strategic area of focus a few years ago. Focusing on quality of life and initiatives that encourage employees to relocate and young professionals to stay is crucial.

- Start young. Developing those talented young professionals is also a key to success. Many of the cities we have visited have emphasized the importance of education and workforce development.

- Encourage entrepreneurs. Attracting large employers to your city is obviously important. But the vast majority of the economy is small businesses, so it's important to develop an environment where young businesses can thrive.

- Giving back. Loving your city means giving back to it. The successful cities we have visited show a strong philanthropic spirit.

BRINGING IT HOME

The initiatives, programs and developments that have helped move the Springfield region forward in the last 25-plus years required a lot of heavy lifting by stakeholders from all sectors of the community.

The Community Leadership Visit program has been the spark for many of these programs, encouraged the continued growth of others and helped reshape still others. So where do we go from here? No matter the trip destination, one thing is certain: Community leaders understand the value of taking time to learn from their peers and work together. Collaboration between the public and private sector, and the dialogues and conversations that occur organically between the participants, are some of the most valuable takeaways. "When you look back at what we have learned in 26 years, the body of knowledge we've accumulated is incredible," says Chamber President Matt Morrow. "That only happens because we're willing to step back and take a look at ourselves. That's not always easy to do, but I'm grateful to live in a community where our leaders want to strive to be better every day."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The following projects were influenced by CLV.

- Springfield Regional Economic Partnership
- Jordan Valley Park
- Wonders of Wildlife Museum
- The new airport terminal
- Renaming of Springfield-Branson National Airport
- Jordan Valley Innovation Center
- The Network for Young Professionals
- The Facing Racism program
- The Community Focus Report
- Community-wide visioning initiatives
- State-level workforce development programs

26 YEARS OF KEY TAKEAWAYS

WHAT DO SUCCESSFUL CITIES HAVE IN COMMON?

1 Collaboration and partnerships



2 Regional development

3 Downtown/center city development



4 Capitalizing on natural beauty

5 Focus on talent attraction and YPs

6 Support for education and workforce

7 An environment for entrepreneurs



8 A spirit of philanthropy

9 Bold leaders willing to take risks



10 A high-quality airport system

11 Embrace assets and create a unique identity

LEADERSHIP

BUSINESS LEADER PROFILES

Leaders who have shaped our chamber and community



18

JIM ANDERSON

22

JOHN OKE-THOMAS

24

JOHN T. WOODRUFF

26

LOGAN AGUIRRE AND
DEBBIE SHANTZ HART

28

ANN MARIE BAKER

30

JOHN Q. HAMMONS

32

BILL TURNER

Photo courtesy Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

WHAT'S ONLINE

TO READ THE FULL STORIES OF
THE PROFILES INCLUDED IN THIS
PUBLICATION, HEAD ONLINE TO
SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL.

Ann Marie Baker has been
part of the chamber
since the '80s. She be-
came board chair in 2007.



LEADERSHIP

Business Leader Profiles



Jim Anderson became President of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce in 1988 and served in that role for 25 years.

A MAN OF CHANGE

Jim Anderson led Springfield through a quarter century of economic development. He did it through collaboration.

BY TOM CARLSON

▶ For those who have watched Springfield's growth over the last few decades, they'll likely remember that the city's economic development efforts were stuck in the slow lane in the 1980s. Unlike the go-go days of the '50s and '60s, growth had become a bad word. Even the mayor opposed it. For many, Springfield was a mid-sized town where you could earn a living and raise a family. But that belief ignored gathering storm clouds. Manufacturing jobs were dwindling as foreign competition moved in; suburban growth led to the construction of Battlefield Mall and the closing of the square to traffic had killed Downtown and Commercial Street business; and city revenues to maintain streets and sidewalks were inadequate. This was the situation Jim Anderson took on as president of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce in February 1988.

GROWING UP OZARK

An Ozarks native, Anderson was familiar with regional dynamics. He grew up in Ozark, received an education degree from Southwest Missouri State (SMS) and eventually moved to Jefferson City where he married his wife, Janet, and taught school. In 1979, his path took a turn when he was hired to lead the Jefferson City Chamber. While there, Anderson saw a lack of enthusiasm from the corner of the state where he'd grown up. "The feeling in Jefferson City about Springfield was that it did not want to be involved and just wanted to do its own thing," he remembers. Then Anderson wound up in Springfield and got a chance to change that.

To change Springfield's image in Jefferson City, Anderson used a coordinated approach to interface with the legislature. Shortly after taking the job, Anderson elevated the Legislative

Photos courtesy Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

“

In those days there was not a Southwest Missouri mentality. We said, ‘Folks we know you represent your constituents, but we need to think in terms of the Springfield region to have more impact.’”

—Jim Anderson

Salute each January in Jefferson City. Representatives from the city, county, school board, OTC and Missouri State would charter buses to the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City and host what was usually the largest reception of the year. It was a way for Springfield leaders to be seen and heard in the capital.

At the same time, the Springfield chamber hosted monthly legislative breakfasts in Jefferson City to make sure the larger Ozarks region’s needs were heard and understood. “In those days there was not a Southwest Missouri mentality,” Anderson says. “We said, ‘Folks, we know you represent your constituents, but we need to think in terms of the Springfield region to have more impact.’” For years, Anderson had watched Kansas City and St. Louis lobby extensively and successfully, and he knew Springfield and the surrounding communities needed to follow suit if they wanted their cities to grow. “Springfield was known nationally as not wanting to grow,” he says. In fact, the previous mayor had avowed no growth. “I felt that we all needed to get on the same page to begin with,” Anderson says. That meant collaboration and creative solutions.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

While things were changing for Springfield in Jefferson City, Anderson was also busy in the Queen City as he worked to stir up improvements. In 1988, Springfield’s public and private sectors were not readily in the habit of teaming up. To change that, Anderson proposed the formation of the Community Leadership Forum.

Its members would meet monthly to discuss community issues. The overarching goal was to encourage collaboration when dealing with city-wide issues, and most major players participated including the chamber, City of Springfield, City Utilities, Springfield Public Schools, United Way, organized labor and area colleges and universities among others. This group was key to advance planning and prioritization especially related to issues requiring voter approval.

CREATING AN ELECTION PLAYBOOK

When Anderson came back to the Ozarks, Springfield was struggling to pass capital improvement proposals, so strategizing the number of tax issues on each ballot improved the city’s odds of passing new initiatives. But Anderson went one step further and created a playbook the chamber could use for new ballot measures.

Tom Finnie, city manager, and Anderson were on the same page from the start. Each time a new proposal was submitted by the city, the chamber conducted a rigorous committee review. If opposition to a proposal developed, every effort was made to address specific concerns. The newspaper’s editorial staff would also be educated in hopes of garnering their support. If the chamber board endorsed the issue and opted to manage a campaign to support the

ballot measure, Anderson’s playbook included bringing on campaign co-chairs as well as employing a highly effective plan of community and voter contact.

Once the election was over, communication remained a top priority for the city. As each sidewalk or road project got underway, a sign was erected that said, “Working as Promised.” When it was completed, another sign was erected that said, “Completed as Promised.” The process for setting a standard of accountability and building trust with voters was simple. “Plan your work and work your plan.”

Subsequent capital improvement and transportation measures passed by an ever-growing majority due to Anderson’s playbook and the trust built by Finnie with follow-up communications. Voters passed proposals that made possible Jordan Valley Park, Jordan Valley Ice Park and Hammons Field, and when Anderson retired in 2014, the city had passed 27 elections and lost only four.

DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT

Anderson and Finnie also worked together on the redevelopment of downtown. Springfield’s downtown had been deteriorating for 20 years ever since the Battlefield Mall opened in the early 1970s and the Public Square, as well as St. Louis and College streets, had been turned into a pedestrian mall. But shutting off traffic to downtown was like cutting off the area’s oxygen. Ten years later, work was underway to revitalize the area, which began by reopening the square to traffic.

After opening the square, the city formed a Community Improvement District (CID) downtown that called for property owners to impose a property tax upon themselves dedicated to Center City purposes. It was a big ask, and the chamber participated on the CID board from the start. Downtown banker Brian Fogle (now president of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks) and Anderson went door to door to collect signatures to form the CID.

In the meantime, the city started appropriating federal Community Development Block Grants and helped finance projects downtown or on Commercial Street and helped fund loft apart-

Anderson spoke at the groundbreaking for a company at the Partnership Industrial Center. The industrial center played a big role in attracting new business to Springfield.





LEADERSHIP

Business Leader Profiles

ments and small businesses. The goal was to bring in a mix of destination venues like the Me-diacom Ice Park or Hammons Field plus small retail businesses and residential units. As down-town started to grow, MSU took notice and joined the action by establishing the Roy Blunt Jordan Valley Innovation Center.

By 2017, the seven-story, 75,000-square-foot center was occupied by four private companies and two university research centers. Following the success of JVIC, MSU established a new business incubator, the efactory, a block away. On the other side of Boonville, MSU moved its art and design department into some of the six buildings called Brick City in IDEA Commons.

At JVIC's 10-year anniversary ceremony in June 2017, current Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce President Matt Morrow said the jobs supported by the Innovation Center "represents so much of our aspirational future of our community and our economy. Ten years in and the vision is clearer today than ever—accelerating innovation through collaboration."

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

The rebirth of downtown signaled a big change for Springfield. It was the first time in a long time that the city was looking ahead and relying on new industries to continue its momentum. For many years prior, Springfield had relied on manufacturing and production jobs to support its residents, which was getting harder to do as more companies moved operations overseas where labor and property were cheaper.

In 1987, the year before Jim returned to Springfield, the consulting firm Fantus Company produced an analysis outlining Springfield's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This was at a time when Zenith Electronics Corporation was reducing local production of televisions as operations increased in Mexico. Fantus identified three major weaknesses: the need for improved air travel in and out of the city, poor labor management relations and declining manufacturing jobs due to globalization.

The chamber knew it needed to promote economic development to attract industries to support the city's workforce. "In the '50s and '60s, there was an aggressive recruiting effort that

brought to town companies like Kraft, Zenith and Lily Tulip," Anderson says. "By the late '80s, those efforts were no longer being made."

At one time, Zenith employed 3,300 workers in Springfield, but those jobs had been moving to Mexico. If the plant closed, it was not going to be easy to replace those jobs or find a use for Zenith's two-million-square-foot facility on East Kearney. Then news hit in October 1991.

"Terry Connor, who was the Zenith plant manager, called me one morning and said, 'We need to have lunch,' and I knew something was up," Anderson says. Conner announced later that day that Zenith was laying off 1,500 of its 2,000 workers and moving their jobs to Mexico. The immediate question facing the community was what to do about the loss of jobs.

Anderson wasn't sure of the answer, but he knew he had to gather community leaders and make a plan. "Immediately after lunch, I called Tom Finnie, Paul Hagerty (superintendent of schools), Bob Roundtree and the chairman of the chamber that year, and we decided we were going to roll up our sleeves and do something." Anderson was taking community collaboration to a whole new level.

PARTNERSHIP INDUSTRIAL CENTER

With major manufacturing like Zenith headed out the door, Anderson and other community leaders needed to find a way to attract a new crop of business to town. One solution was the creation of an industrial park, but there was a small problem. As the Fantus report noted, Springfield had a shortage of industrial land new industries would be looking for. To fix this, Springfield needed to have a site already in place in order

to shorten a company's lead time in starting operations and make Springfield more attractive.

There was just one hiccup. Large industrial parks are capital intensive. Millions of dollars must be spent in acquiring the land and putting in the infrastructure before the first lot can be sold. It is a risky endeavor for private investors, but cities and utilities usually have constant revenue streams and can frequently afford to make the investments when private enterprise cannot. City Utilities General Manager Robert Roundtree saw this as an opportunity. Armed with the Fantus report and the Zenith announcement, Roundtree teamed up with Anderson and the two proposed creating an industrial park as a private/public collaboration.

It was a structure Anderson had seen work in Jefferson City. There, the city, county and chamber had a formal economic development partnership in which the city and the county hired the chamber to do economic development services. But in Springfield, that was heresy to some people. When Anderson first proposed a similar public/private partnership between the city, utility and chamber at a council meeting, Anderson says he was called a socialist. The idea could have died right then and there if Anderson had not been convinced of the benefits of public/private partnerships. Instead, he and Roundtree entered into a 10-year battle over the proper role of government in city economic development issues. Chamber volunteer leadership came down both sides of the issue.

After three years of much heated debate, the governing boards of the three partners finally approved the proposal. The three partners were



.....
One of Anderson's big pushes while president of the chamber was collaboration. He managed to unite the major players in the city in order to bring together the city, business community and school systems. ▶



the City of Springfield, City Utilities and the chamber's Springfield Business Development Corporation (SBDC). The final contract was modeled after the agreement Jefferson City adopted when Jim was president of its chamber.

Under the arrangement, the city would put in the infrastructure, City Utilities would purchase the land and install the power, and the SBDC would handle marketing. To reduce criticism from commercial realtors, the partnership agreed to pay real estate commissions and agreed to not permit warehousing/office development. City Utilities bought 340 acres from the Griesemer family who operated the nearby Springfield Underground, and soon the project was underway.

The very first sale happened in 1994 when Contico, a St. Louis plastic goods manufacturer specializing in injection molding, came to town. Contico paid \$450,000 for 30 acres and then announced it planned to create 300 new jobs.

"We learned about the sale on Christmas Eve in 1993, and that was our best Christmas present ever," Anderson says. "By the time the last lot was sold in 2006, 22 manufacturers had located at the Partnership Industrial Center, occupying 2.3 million square feet and employing 2,700 workers with excellent pay and benefits," Anderson says. Once full, the partnership wanted to continue the momentum and purchased 408 acres in 2001 adjacent to the Springfield airport and named it PIC-West. By the time this magazine went to press, 11 manufacturers have located there. As for the two-million-square-foot Zenith facility on Kearney, it was eventually converted by Springfield native Johnny Morris into the headquarters for Bass Pro Shops.

2000 ADVOCACY IN EDUCATION

Attracting quality employers to Springfield was just one part of Anderson's vision. He also knew he needed to improve the city's workforce. With the decline in manufacturing jobs and the transition to a service-based economy, the importance of educating the next generation's workforce was growing. Service-based jobs were filling the void, but frequently, these jobs required employees to have a different skill set.

The best jobs were jobs in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), but they required education beyond high school. Armed with that fact, the chamber turned its attention to Springfield Public Schools—the largest public-school system in the state. Anderson and the chamber knew, in order to improve the city's



Anderson served as president of the chamber in Jefferson City before joining the Springfield chamber. His time there helped him realize how the state saw Springfield.

workforce, it had to start with efforts at home.

The Chamber started recruiting and endorsing candidates for the school board in 2000. The effort has been largely successful and long-term recruiting efforts are now conducted in collaboration with several community partners.

The Chamber has also reviewed and endorsed school bond and other funding proposals over the years. Through the chamber's Community Leadership Visits, leaders studied a number of best practices related to establishing a sustainable, community-driven advocacy committee to support funding needs of the school district over time. In 2019, a cross-section of business and education leaders established Friends of SPS with the goal of advocating for Proposition S, a board-proposed increase to the debt-service levy to fund high-priority facility projects. A similar proposal had failed in 2017. With the backing of Friends of SPS and endorsed by the Chamber, Prop S passed with more 60% approval.

The chamber has also supported other educational needs, such as endorsing and managing a campaign through affiliate Committee for the Future in 2018 to pass both OTC's proposed renewal of an existing 5-cent tax levy and a new 5-cent property tax levy to expand high-demand technical and health care programs at several campuses and to establish a new Center for Ad-

vanced Manufacturing and Technology. Both issues were approved by voters in the district and plans for the manufacturing center are now well underway.

LOOKING FORWARD

While the chamber was active in school board elections, it also formed The Network to attract and retain young professionals in Springfield under the age of 40. The Network continues to grow and now has 450 members.

Every generation has its challenges. Just as in the 1980s, Springfield will have to decide how it will adapt to a changing world. Building on the strong foundation of entrepreneurship and collaboration advanced by Jim Anderson over his decades of leadership has supported a successful transition into the future.

HEAD ONLINE
.....
TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION,
HEAD TO [SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL](http://SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL).

Photos courtesy Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce



LEADERSHIP

Business Leader Profiles



John Oke-Thomas grew up in Nigeria and eventually moved to Springfield to pursue an education and a career as an architect. One of his first major projects was helping Drury move and reconstruct the historic Washington Avenue Baptist Church.

FINDING A VOICE

John Oke-Thomas isn't from Springfield, but for him, this is home. Now he's making sure minority leaders and business owners also have a home and a future in the Queen City.

BY TOM CARLSON

▶ Growing up in Nigeria, it took awhile for John Oke-Thomas to feel at home after he left his native country with the goal of continuing his education. After stints in Italy, France and the United Kingdom, Oke-Thomas eventually landed in Springfield, Missouri. In some ways, Springfield reminded Oke-Thomas of home, but the Nigerian native was constantly reminded that he was a minority in his new country. As the chamber worked to include more

minority members on its board and in leadership roles, Oke-Thomas found a chance to serve as a voice for a community that felt left out of the conversation.

As a young boy in Nigeria, Oke-Thomas didn't realize his father's social activism would rub off on him—In fact, Oke-Thomas' social activism wouldn't kick in until later in life. His father, after graduating from pharmacy school in London, moved back to Nigeria and joined the

Unity Party, which Oke-Thomas says promoted free education for everyone in the country and was often at odds with other political parties. "The various parties were constantly at war with each other," Oke-Thomas remembers. "If your party was out of power, you might end up in jail as my father did."

After high school, Oke-Thomas left Nigeria and headed for Europe to continue his education. He received an Associate Degree at The



“**There is a shortage of carpenters, masonry, plumbing and HVAC technicians. If we are not careful, we are going to find ourselves in a tough situation in five or six years.**”

—John Oke-Thomas

Polytechnic of North London then worked in the city’s public works department. “I spent two years making sure cobblestones on the streets of London were turned right side up,” he jokes.

COMING TO DRURY

With a goal of becoming an architect, Oke-Thomas was accepted at the University of Kansas but was overwhelmed by the size of the campus. When a friend suggested he check out Drury College, he visited and felt at home. After three years on campus, Oke-Thomas was one credit hour short of receiving his degree, but he had to pause his academic pursuits while the school’s architecture program received its accreditation. Two years later in 1990, Oke-Thomas returned to campus and took his last credit hour—in weightlifting. After a three-year internship with Warren & Goodin, Oke-Thomas sat for his boards in 1993.

That same year, Oke-Thomas was hired by Springfield Public Schools to help with the construction and remodeling of its facilities. The project gave Oke-Thomas a boost, and by 1996 he was ready to open his own architecture firm. As it happened, one of his largest clients was also his alma mater. Oke-Thomas managed the renovation of several buildings on the Drury campus, and the school retained him to assist in the development of a new campus master plan.

WASHINGTON AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH CONTROVERSY

While working on Drury’s master plan, Oke-Thomas learned the school wanted to purchase Washington Avenue Baptist Church to make way for Drury’s new facility. The church held special significance to Springfield’s African-American residents. It dates back to 1868, and in 1906 African-Americans took shelter in the sanctuary after three black men were lynched on the square without a trial. News of the church’s proposed demolition was met with uproar. It fell upon Oke-Thomas to develop a compromise. “One idea was to hire the firm that moved London Bridge to Arizona,” Thom- as says, “but the cost was \$1 million, and they would not guarantee the work.”

For the next several months Oke-Thomas acted as the liaison between Drury, church

members and historical advocates. Eventually, he constructed a plan that mirrored the move of London Bridge. Slowly, the crew disassembled the church brick by brick and numbered each brick and each pallet so the structure could be reassembled on a new site at 803 North Washington Avenue. Even design flaws in the original church were rebuilt exactly as they were found.

“During construction, we discovered that the stained glass had been installed inside out originally, and that is the way we put it back,” Oke-Thomas says. Drury spent \$500,000 on the project and named it the Diversity Center at Historic Washington Avenue Baptist Church and received a “Commendation Letter” from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources for the project. “My proudest moment was when a former congregant living in California came into the church and didn’t even realize it had been moved,” Oke-Thomas says.

MINORITIES IN BUSINESS

After relocating the Washington Avenue Baptist Church, Oke-Thomas joined the congregation, and the social activist roots he inherited from his father were awakened as he realized Spring- field’s young African-Americans were moving to urban areas like Kansas City or St. Louis. “We have had a brain drain in this area,” he says.

To combat the issue, Oke-Thomas, Lyle Fos- ter and Wes Pratt formed Minorities in Business (MIB) in 2009. Lyle moved from Chicago to

Springfield to start Big Momma’s Coffee and Espresso Bar on Commercial Street, and Pratt grew up in Springfield and lived in San Diego where he served on the city council before mov- ing back to take a job in administration at MSU.

Their objective was to assist minority entre- preneurs grow their businesses. The three MIB co-founders conducted workshops on market- ing skills and networking, and together they urged local government to accelerate efforts to recruit minorities to Springfield.

CHAMBER ACTIVITY

Aware that greater diversity is often linked with economic development, the chamber made an even greater effort to connect its work to minority business owners in 2010. The initia- tive strengthened the relationship between MIB and the chamber. “Chamber members started coming to our meetings,” Oke-Thomas says. “Not too long after that, I was invited to serve on the chamber board.”

Oke-Thomas believes that the discussion of inequality is now moving from a racial basis to a class basis. His focus on the chamber has since expanded to workforce development. He believes the city needs to increase its effort to train young people in the vocational and techni- cal trades. “A four-year college degree is not for everyone,” he says.

“I see it every day as an architect” he says. “There is a shortage of carpenters, masonry, plumbing and HVAC technicians. If we are not careful, we are going to find ourselves in a tough situation in five or six years, as we will not have the workforce to fill these positions.”

The sociologist Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; in- deed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Forty years after leaving his country, Oke-Thomas too remains strong in that same commitment.

HEAD ONLINE
.....
TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION,
HEAD TO [SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL](http://SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL).

BUILT TO LAST

Developer John Woodruff might be one of Springfield's best advocates and least known visionaries.

BY KAITLYN MCCONNELL

There's no denying that Springfield would look much different without the life and legacy of John T. Woodruff. Yet time has largely erased the memories of this mover and shaker, and 70 years since his death, no dedicated monument stands to his memory. For glimpses of Woodruff's impact on Springfield, you have to look around.

For about 40 years, Woodruff helped define Springfield's development. He helped create Route 66 and its lap through Springfield. He helped bring the Frisco Railway's west shops to town. He built the city's first skyscraper—the 10-story Woodruff Building—in 1911. He was behind several hotels in the heart of Springfield's downtown district that have since been repurposed but that still stand today.

Woodruff served multiple terms as president of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, and he led efforts to acquire land for the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, which was coming to town. He was a force behind the location of O'Reilly General Army Hospital during World War II, which created nearly a second city within Springfield's limits and drew thousands to the area.

"There are a lot of people who have the vision but aren't able to make it happen. There are others who can make things happen, but don't have a vision," says Tom Peters, a local historian who has written a biography of Woodruff. "He had both. That was really a rare combination."

Out of all of his accomplishments, the one that stands out the most is Woodruff's focus on making Springfield a hub for transportation by rail, road and air. His efforts ultimately brought people and businesses to and through town, which led to prolonged industrial growth that long outlasted Woodruff's lifetime.

"Mr. Woodruff always could see 20 years ahead of anyone else—and Springfield desper-



ately needs that sort of vision," proclaimed an editorial in the *Springfield Leader & Press* after his death in 1949. "But as far as we can observe, there is no one to take Mr. Woodruff's place as our civic seer and prophet. Yet he was not only a prophet. He was an evangelist, too... He had the vision for a better world and the faith to believe he could help make it come true. And he did."

STARTING IN SPRINGFIELD

Woodruff was born on January 6, 1868, in Franklin County. After leaving home at age 16, Woodruff ended up in Vichy, where he became a lawyer and passed the state bar exam in 1889. Less than two years later, he began serving as prosecuting attorney of Crawford County. He was only in his early 20s when elected to the position. In 1896, he was hired as an attorney by the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway. It

was a selection greatly celebrated in his home community, as noted in the *Mirror* newspaper, which printed in January 1896 that "everybody in Crawford County will rejoice to learn of the success of that brilliant young lawyer."

By 1901, Woodruff was promoted and became the assistant general solicitor for the entire Frisco system, and three years later, Woodruff was named Missouri Attorney for the Frisco and he and his young family relocated to Springfield. "...The springs, rivers and wooded hills of the Ozarks were calling me back home," he wrote. "For better or worse, and with some misgivings, we left St. Louis for Springfield, February 4, 1904."

After moving to Springfield, Woodruff spent 40 years investing time, money and vision into the region. One of his main contributions



◀ The Woodruff Building was built in 1911. The 10-story building was Springfield's first skyscraper and still stands today. When it first opened, it was a mixed-use space and housed a barber shop, office space and local government agencies.

.....

was the creation of the Frisco West Maintenance and Repair Shops. The shops employed thousands of Springfield men who handled railroad-related repairs and maintenance, and as the Frisco expanded, there was an “urgent need,” as Woodruff put it, for better shops. When Woodruff learned St. Louis, Monett and Springfield were all in the running to host the new developments, he didn’t waste time advocating for Springfield. His efforts paid off, and on Jan. 27, 1907, the *Republican’s* headline heralded the news: “Frisco to invest over \$1,000,000 in new car shops in Springfield.”

FOURTH STATE NORMAL SCHOOL

Woodruff had his hand in much of Springfield’s growth, including the arrival of Missouri State University. Back then, the school was better known as Fourth State Normal School, and Woodruff helped the school get its start in 1905.

The primary focus of normal schools was training teachers, and such an institution was highly sought after. After plans were announced for a fourth school to be built in Missouri, towns including Lamar, El Dorado Springs, Greenfield, Lockwood, Ash Grove, Mountain Grove, Walnut Grove, Marshfield, Lebanon, Aurora, Pierce City, Neosho, Webb City and Springfield threw their hats into the ring.

As part of the deal, towns were expected to offer incentives and explanations as to why their location was best. Woodruff became Springfield’s main advocate and worked through the Springfield Club, a precursor to the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, to visit Jefferson City to extol Springfield’s virtues.

When state evaluation commission members were shown possible sites in Springfield, they were attracted to a place known as the Headly tract. It was a wooded spot of around 40 acres owned by Woodruff and two other local men who planned to turn it into a subdivision. When it became clear the commission was interested in the wooded acreage, Woodruff and his partners donated the land to the Normal School.

According to Missouri State University’s website, classes began on June 11, 1906, with 543 students in off-campus facilities. The first building on the Springfield campus, known today as Carrington Hall, was completed January 1909. More than 100 years later, the university has grown into one of the region’s leading universities with more than 26,000 students in the system and nearly 4,000 employees.

DEVELOPMENT AND ROUTE 66

Among his other accomplishments, Woodruff became a prolific developer. After leaving the practice of law in 1909, Woodruff pursued this passion and purchased property at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Park Central East and built his namesake structure—the Woodruff Building. It was Springfield’s first skyscraper, and “contained 276 offices, with a bank, drug store, substation post office, and tobacco shop on the first floor,” Woodruff wrote. “There was a billiards parlor, barber shop and engineers quarters in the basement.”

The Woodruff Building opened to the public on February 2, 1911, and was heralded by the *Republican* for setting “the pace through the



**Mr. Woodruff
always could see
20 years ahead
of anyone else—
and Springfield
desperately needs
that sort of vision.”**

—*Springfield Leader & Press* 1949

new era of progressiveness for the Queen City of the Ozarks.”

The next several years were busy ones for Woodruff, who had many grand openings to attend. Woodruff built The Sansone Hotel, located on Park Central East, created the residential neighborhood called the Country Club District, opened Pinebrook Inn in rural Howell County, and in 1925, Woodruff began work on The Kentwood Arms Hotel and soon opened Hickory Hills Golf Course.

“The great game of golf has become so great a part of our American program,” Woodruff told a newspaper reporter. “The man who plays golf can touch elbows with the world and it seems highly probable that Springfield will soon become one of the golf centers of this section of the country.”

As it turns out, it wasn’t golf that made Springfield a national hub. It was Route 66, and Woodruff, of course, was behind the wheel. In the 1920s, highway officials and promoters had put in a request with the federal government—they wanted to name a long-fought stretch of road Route 66. When the project was approved, development was led by the U.S. 66 Highway Association, and Woodruff became its president and guided the project successfully.

END YEARS

Toward the end of his life, Woodruff relocated to Pinebrook Inn, the resort he had opened in Howell County, and in January 1949, Woodruff died while visiting his daughter in Minnesota. It was a quiet end to a life that accomplished so much. Even after all his success, there were dreams Woodruff didn’t see accomplished during his lifetime. Nevertheless, Woodruff made a significant and far-reaching difference. Several newspaper articles upon his death hailed his accomplishments. The day after his death, a Springfield newspaper dedicated its editorial in his honor:

“Springfield today is a city in which its inhabitants, new and old, take pride—and with reason... The thousands of new Springfieldians who have swelled the city’s population in the past decade share the civic satisfaction... But they never can realize, as the older residents cannot fail to realize, how all of these things were so largely the result of one man’s efforts, one man’s vision and energy.”

Passing years have largely seen Woodruff’s name fade from memory though his legacy was honored in 1999, when Woodruff was heralded by *Springfield News-Leader* columnist Mike O’Brien as the city’s “Most Influential Springfieldian” of the 20th century. While several buildings he owned and built still stand, the last remaining monument to his name faded away in 2015 when The Woodruff Building was remodeled into student housing and renamed Sky Eleven. But perhaps that would not have bothered Woodruff, a man who loved the best in the region and worked to make it better.

HEAD ONLINE
.....
TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION,
HEAD TO [SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL](http://SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL).



LEADERSHIP

Business Leader Profiles



Debra Shantz Hart (left) was the fourth woman to serve as chair of the chamber board. Logan Aguirre (right) will be the sixth woman chair in 2021.

A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

The Springfield Chamber has only had four women serve as the chair of the board. The fifth, Robin Robeson, stepped into that role in 2020, and in 2021, she'll be followed by Logan Aguirre, president and associate publisher of *417 Magazine*. To learn about the progress the chamber has made when it comes to diversity Logan and Debra Shantz Hart, owner of Housing Plus LLC and the fourth woman to serve as chair of the board, met up to talk about the past, present and future.

BY ETTIE BERNEKING



ETTIE BERNEKING: I know the two of you are not officially mentor and mentee, but Logan, you've turned to Debra to learn more about what to expect in your upcoming year as chair of the board. So how did the two of you meet in the first place?

LOGAN AGUIRRE: I feel like I've just always known you. Once you're introduced to someone, you see them everywhere!

DEBRA SHANTZ HART: I think we first met when we were introduced at a workout class at Dan Kinney. Then a few weeks after that, I saw you out, and you were gorgeous. You were dressed in real clothes, and I thought, "Wow that Logan has it going on."

L.A.: That's right! Then when the chamber first asked me to consider the board chairmanship, I asked you to go to lunch so I could hear your perspective. She got me very excited.

BERNEKING: What were you nervous about with the role?

L.A.: I asked her if there was anything she didn't know going into it that she wished she knew and what it was like to balance life, work and the chamber. And because I'm perceived as younger, how did she think that would be received.

D.H.: Well, I'll be honest. It's easy to sell the chamber. It's a great organization. It helps iden-

Photo by Brandon Alms



Don't be afraid to be an advocate for the things you're passionate about."

—Debra Shantz Hart

tify the reasons Springfield is a great place to live, and it helps small businesses. It's easy to be high on the chamber, and it's important to get good leaders who aren't the stereotypical chamber leaders. I think it's a huge asset for the chamber—and for you—to have someone perceived as younger. It changes the perception people have of the chamber.

BERNEKING: Debra, is there anything you miss about being chair of the board?

D.H.: I will tell you selfishly as the chair, you're in the know. Then you go cold turkey and you're not the chair and you don't know anything.

L.A.: I'll toss you a bone or two.

D.H.: Thank you!

BERNEKING: What are you most proud of from your time as chair?

D.H.: We changed something my year. In the past, the chamber had always done membership drives to increase membership, which helps with the budget. But we changed that and started the Reach Campaign. It allows business members to sponsor chamber events where they want their business to be highlighted. In my mind, it's more of a resource alignment. You pre-sell these sponsorships, so businesses can manage their budgets based on the asks that are coming in, and the chamber can solidify its budget earlier. Also, people used to buy chamber memberships because they were our friends, but they didn't know what the chamber was all about. This is a better way, and I think people really feel they're getting value for their membership.

L.A.: The Reach Campaign has made such a positive impact in connecting members to opportunities, and the chamber still does it every year. But you're right, the events budget is locked in thanks to Reach. It is outstanding to see such commitment. There's no more worrying because the fundraising is already done.

D.H.: That gives the chamber the ability to focus on what it's really meant to do, which is focus on advocacy and networking and connecting our community leaders. I think the Reach Campaign has been great so far.

BERNEKING: Logan, what are you excited about with your upcoming term in 2021?

L.A.: I'll be giving that a lot of thought, and I will spend the next year listening and observing. But I do think it will be about diversity and inclusion. I think it's the right time to have that conversation at the chamber. MSU did a campus climate study in the spring. While there are still small gaps in the responses of majority and minority group students, we did better than most universities in the study. The one area of the study that scored below average was the experience underrepresented students had off campus. Students felt Springfield sometimes wasn't welcoming. We need to improve this. I think the chamber and the city can have a real role in changing this. Otherwise retention of talent will continue to be an issue in Springfield. I think having back-to-back women as chair shows we're leaders in this conversation.

BERNEKING: Have the two of you seen changes at the chamber when it comes to diversity?

D.H.: Oh yes. I've seen a lot of change at the chamber, and I'll tell you, a lot of that is thanks to past chairman Jeff Schrag. Jeff was all about diversity at the chamber. Our membership and our board reflected Jeff's focus on diversity. When I left the chamber board, it was almost 50/50 women to men. I was first on the board in 1994. I will tell you, I was one of two women on the board, and there might be 30 members on the board. What a change!

L.A.: Well, it's the first time we will have back-to-back women as Chairs, so that's a big change! And it feels like the board has more of a progressive mindset than I would have expected looking in from the outside. I think a lot of that is because there's been a focus on bringing in more women and younger voices to the board.

BERNEKING: Logan, how did you end up getting involved with the chamber?

L.A.: Honestly, I didn't get plugged into the chamber until recently. I was part of The Network when it launched, but most of my energy has been focused on my involvement with Junior League, my young kids and my growing role at *417 Magazine*. When the chamber called to ask me to be on the board, I was honored and excited. My first meeting was like drinking from the firehose. There's so much to learn! To be honest, I'm nervous about moving into the role, but past chairs have been so supportive and encouraging. I'm going to pour my heart into it.

D.H.: Sure, but we all have a goal of making Springfield a better place to live, so I don't think there's going to be any second thoughts about you serving as chair.

L.A.: No one seems worried except me. But I am really excited because this aligns so well with my passion at the magazine. Our mission is to celebrate why Springfield is a great place to live, work and play. This will just be one more way I can broadcast why Springfield is so great.

D.H.: I think your job aligns beautifully with your upcoming role at the chamber. You have a unique skill set and, frankly, I think you can carry the torch just as well or better than most people. This is what you do for a living.

BERNEKING: Debra, do you have any helpful advice for Logan about serving as chair of the board?

D.H.: My advice is this: The chamber staff is wonderful, so rely on them as much as you want, but put your stamp on it. There's opportunity to do things that can help move the needle for Springfield, and you have a unique perspective on that. Don't be afraid to be an advocate for the things you're passionate about, but you won't run into roadblocks. We all have the same goals of making Springfield a great place.

L.A.: Thank you!



LEADERSHIP

Business Leader Profiles



Ann Marie Baker started volunteering for the chamber in the '80s. She was eventually named chair of the board in 2007.

LENDING A HELPING HAND

Ann Marie Baker spent nearly two decades volunteering for the chamber before becoming chair of the board.

BY TOM CARLSON

If chamber involvement were a sport, Ann Marie Baker would be a player not a spectator. She has participated in about every chamber activity available since joining in the late '80s.

When the UMB executive first joined the chamber, her initial committee assignment was working on member retention. It was a lot of phone work encouraging chamber members to pay their delinquent dues. While dinging people to pay what they owe is part of a banker's job sometimes, it is not the fun part of the job. But Ann Marie has always looked for the upside. "I was a natural fit based upon my industry," she says. Her mother worked in the Bank of Atchison County in Rock Port, Missouri, for 13 years, so banking is in her DNA.

As it turns out, "It was a good way to learn about how members felt about the chamber," she says. "Not being from Springfield, it was a

nice way to learn about the community. I met people that I would not have met any other way because of that volunteer service."

The northern Missouri native continued to serve on chamber committees through the '90s and in other service organizations including the Junior League, which she chaired in 1996. Then in 2005, Lisa Officer, a board member who had served with Baker on the Junior League Board and years later on the board of City Utilities, asked her to join the chamber board.

"It was not an opportunity I had sought out," Baker says. "But I was delighted about the opportunity to serve." When Baker joined the board, the chamber was in the middle of responding to an economic landscape much different than 20 years earlier. Many well-paying manufacturing jobs had been lost to overseas competition, and the best job opportunities required a more educated workforce.

If Springfield was going to compete, it needed collaboration between local government and private sectors. Cities that were succeeding were characterized by an educated and diverse workforce. It was important that the chamber, local government and the education sector be on the same page.

To that end, the chamber got involved in recruiting and endorsing candidates for the school board. Soon after she joined the board, Baker dove into the recruiting effort. She was a natural for the job, having grown up learning about school matters from her father, who was the superintendent in her hometown. "Part of the process was identifying potential candidates who had the right professional backgrounds and approach to serve," she says. Next, she had to find out if a candidate would be willing to serve and run for election. She also had to learn if they lived in the Springfield school district.

"Sometimes, we might call them. Sometimes we might take them to lunch. Sometimes, it was one-on-one. And sometimes we would gang up on them," Baker jokes. "But eventually over a period of years, people got to know that was what you were probably calling them about so be prepared. It was generally positive."

After several years on the board, Baker was nominated as board chair in 2007. Her first

Photos courtesy Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce



I talked about my belief that our chamber brings people together. It connects people just like electric lines. We can take that for granted but without it we are broken.”

—Ann Marie Baker

speech to the chamber at large happened at the chamber’s annual meeting on the last Friday in January. More than 1,000 people crowded inside University Plaza that night. It was two weeks after the January 12 ice storm had shut down power to thousands of Springfield residents for as long as two weeks.

“I remember greeting everyone, and we were all basking in the warm glow of electricity,” she says. “I talked about my belief that our chamber brings people together. It connects people just like electric lines. We can take that for granted but without it we are broken.” The ice storm was a tone setter for her, she says.

During the next year, Baker focused on strengthening ties of connectivity. “I was very focused on collaboration,” she says. Those relationships ranged from establishing The Network and extending diversity efforts and outreach to Springfield’s sister city Tlaquepaque, Mexico.

During Baker’s tenure, the chamber pitched Springfield as a city open to entrepreneurs. One of the hardest parts Baker remembers was the

need to overcome the connotations of the word “Ozarks.” “Branson was better known in the country than Springfield was,” she says. “That impression of the Ozarks is a deep one built on national television programs like *The Beverly Hillbillies* in the 1960s.

For years the chamber has sponsored its Good Morning, Springfield! event in the city at different venues to highlight a particular institution. But in keeping with its name as the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Baker recalls one month when the event was moved to Ozark where OTC had just built its Richwood Valley campus. She says it was especially meaningful because of the focus on job training supported by the chamber and the geographical breadth that it represented.

In June 2007, the Jordan Valley Innovation Center had its ribbon cutting. It was an example of the efforts of the connectivity Baker talked about at the annual meeting in January. Reconstruction of the facility on North Boonville was seen as a vote of confidence in downtown.’The



chamber was delighted because the facility aligned perfectly with its efforts to promote Springfield as a place for new entrepreneurs with the University’s focus on incubators.

The chamber’s work could not be accomplished without its volunteers, and a perfect example was evident on the day of the ribbon cutting. “I was called upon to fill in for Chamber President Jim Anderson, because he had already volunteered to serve on the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission,” Baker says. “It was activities like this that have led to further visioning on what’s next for downtown, like opening up Jordan Creek.”

While Baker’s first official address after that devastating ice storm underscored the importance of connectivity between members, institutions and people, her last board meeting of the year resulted in an effort that would connect people living on the margins—Care to Learn.

“It was typical for the outgoing chairman to ask retiring board members to reflect on their service at that last meeting,” Baker says, “and Morey Mechlin’s remarks stood out. She had prepared herself with data about the needs of poor children in the community. She talked about the necessities many children here lack in health, hunger and hygiene. Doug Pitt, who was chairman-elect of the chamber board at that time, said we can’t have that in a town where he was born.” Shortly thereafter Care to Learn was started by Doug, and Mechlin was its director. Now there are chapters all over the state.

Baker is proud her year as board chair ended with another example of connectivity, and her efforts to strengthen the community continue. She has served in numerous other volunteer positions. She served as chair of the chamber’s Springfield Business Development Corporation and served on the board of City Utilities. So if you are looking for Baker, you won’t find her on the bench or in the stands. She will be busy out on the field.



HEAD ONLINE
.....
TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION,
HEAD TO [SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL](http://SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL).

.....
◀ Baker focused on connecting Springfield leaders and businesses during her tenure as board chair.



THE LEGACY OF JOHN Q. HAMMONS

The man, the myth, the legend. John Q. Hammons was one of Springfield's greatest developers, and many Springfield attractions still bear his name.

BY ETTIE BERNEKING, *the full story ran in the January 2019 issue of Biz 417*

There are a few things you should know about John Q. Hammons. His name was not John, and his birthday did not fall on Presidents Day as he liked to say. Hammons—known better as John Q.—was actually born James Quentin Hammons. For nearly 24 years, John Q.'s executive assistant, Jan Robbins, watched her boss fib about his name, age and birthday. She watched him send dozens of cards out on Mother's Day and poinsettias on Christmas. She got calls when he ran through stop signs, and she brought him his one cup of coffee each day. She watched as Hammons' name popped up not only in Springfield but around the country.

By the time he died on May 26, 2013, at the age of 94, Hammons had built 210 hotels in 40 states and was responsible for some of Springfield's best-known buildings including Hammons Tower, Highland Springs, Hammons Field, University Plaza and Convention Center, Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts and the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame.

BECOMING JOHN Q.

During the prime of his career, around 1987, John Q.'s estimated wealth was \$300 million. He was listed in *Forbes* magazine's list of the 400 richest people in the United States. But John Q. was not born wealthy. There were no silver spoons, no trust funds. Instead, there were dairy cows and debt. John Q. was born in Fairview, Missouri, in 1919. His family owned and operated a dairy farm until the Great Depression tightened its grip, and the family lost the farm.

Poverty knocked at John Q.'s door for the first quarter of his life. His first job teaching science, history and physical education at Cassville Junior High brought in just \$40 a month. His first business venture—mortarless bricks—went bust after two years, and John Q. lost \$60,000. As John Q. told it, his first success came when he married Juanita K. Baxter in 1949. For the entirety of their 64-year marriage, John Q. re-

ferred to Juanita as Mrs. Hammons, and even in their early days, he warned Mrs. Hammons that business would be at the center of his life. "I didn't have anything," he wrote. "But I told her that I was going to be successful in business."

To dig his way out from under the debt he had accumulated when his mortarless bricks business went belly up, John Q. started developing rental properties. World War II had just ended, and veterans were returning home to find few housing options available to them. The market had a need, and John Q. had a vision. By the time he was 38, he had accumulated enough land to begin development of his newest project yet: Southern Hills.



Our whole community would be different if Hammons didn't invest in us."

—Brent Dunn

By the late '50s, John Q. teamed up with contractor Roy Winegardner with plans to enter the hotel industry. Swankier hotels at the time like Holiday Inn were taking up a larger chunk of the market, and John Q. and Winegardner wanted a piece of that pie. So they approached Charles Kemmons Wilson, the founder of Holiday Inn, and asked about buying into the franchise. As the story goes, Wilson gave John Q. and Winegardner 90 days to find 10 locations for their hotels. "Each one was \$10,000," says Debra Shantz Hart, the previous senior vice president and general counsel at John Q. Hammons Ho-



John Q. Hammons

Photos courtesy Missouri Sports Hall of Fame



LEADERSHIP

Business Leader Profiles

tels. “So Hammons and Roy did it. The duo optioned 10 pieces of property, and they say the rest is history.” Winegardner and Hammons eventually opened 67 Holiday Inn hotels. Then in 1969, John Q. founded John Q. Hammons Hotels as a 50th birthday present to himself. According to his biography, four years later, John Q. had 35 hotels under his belt.

THE EMPIRE

By the end of his career, John Q. could look out over one slice of his empire from his office on the top floor of John Q. Hammons Office Building. From his bird’s-eye view, he could see: Hammons Field, the John Q. Hammons Enterprise Center—the new home to the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, University Plaza Hotel and Convention Center, Hammons Tower and Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts. By 1983, Hammons was busy doing business on both coasts, and as his business and name recognition grew, John Q. showed no signs of slowing down.

Location was everything for John Q., and markets like Dallas; Frisco, Texas; Little Rock, Arkansas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Springfield gave him the chance to fill a niche in a growing community. Once a city was picked out, John Q. would draw maps of the highway system to understand where traffic was headed. Then, he would charter helicopters and planes to fly him over the area at night. Once they spotted large clusters of lights, he’d drop a pin in his maps.

ATTRACTING THE REDBIRDS

For the business titan, athletics were a release. John Q. played basketball throughout high school and college and worked as a basketball coach during his early years teaching. His love of sports was one of his few interests outside of development. And Bill Rowe—MSU Athletic Director from 1982 through 2009—was along for the ride. “He always said, ‘If you get tickets someplace, remember I have the airplane.’” For years, Rowe and John Q. flew to Cincinnati to watch the Reds during spring training, and the two attended final four basketball games.

It was Rowe who first approached John Q. about helping get the Missouri State Bears baseball team a new stadium. The bears had been playing in city parks since 1964, and building a new stadium excited John Q. He also saw the

chance to bring a minor league team to Springfield, and he knew which minor league team should be the main tenants—The Cardinals Double-A team. John Q. headed to St. Louis with his architects and contractor Bill Killian to meet with the Cardinals. At the end of the meeting, John Q. stood up and shook hands. “They told him if he built the stadium he was showing them, they would try to move the Cardinals franchise to Springfield.”

When Hammons Field opened in 2004, the MSU Bears were given their own locker room and batting cages, and in 2005 the Springfield



▲ This rendering of Hammons constructions around downtown Springfield shows just a sample of John Q.’s dominance in Springfield

Cardinals Minor League baseball team moved to Springfield. Rowe says more than 9,000 people crammed into the stadium for the Bear’s opening game against Southern Illinois University. “They were on the berm and on the grass, and all 350 members of the marching band were on the field,” he says. John Q. threw out the first pitch, and Bill Rowe was on the receiving end behind home plate.

If Hammons Field was a home run for John Q., then the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame had him just one swing away from striking out. Before opening in 1994, the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame was little more than a collection of plaques tacked to the walls of a conference room in Jefferson City. When John Q. was approached about developing an actual building for the hall of fame, he didn’t hesitate. He even knew where he wanted to build it. He already owned land in Springfield at the entrance of Highland Springs Country Club, and it checked

all of his boxes: great highway systems, a state college, an emerging market and name recognition. To operate the center, John Q. hired Jerald Andrews in 1995.

When Andrews showed up, only two volunteers were keeping the lights on, and not all of the lights even worked. That first day, Andrews bought 66 light bulbs at Lowes. The following January, Andrews sold tickets to the hall of fame’s annual enshrinement event. “It grossed \$60,000,” he says. After that, Andrews launched a series of ticketed events from luncheons with guest speakers and golf tournaments to off-site enshrinement galas and even a sporting clay shoot.

When finances got tight, John Q. was there. He loaned the hall of fame \$10,000 one time so Andrews could finish payroll. “We paid him back three days later,” Andrews says. Over time, the beefed-up events calendar worked, and the hall of fame was covering all of its expenses and hired full-time staff.

WINDS OF CHANGE

John Q. never retired, but his health forced him to slow down. At 89, he underwent a heart procedure at the Cleveland Clinic, and his remaining years were spent in his penthouse at the Mansion at Elfindale. Then on May 26, 2013, John Q. died at the age of 94.

Years after his death, John Q.’s legacy lives on. “Our whole community would be different if Hammons didn’t invest in us,” says Brent Dunn, vice-president/university advancement and executive director of the Missouri State University Foundation. By the time he died, John Q. had donated more than \$30 million to Missouri State University.

John Q. donated an undisclosed amount to the creation of the Mercy Hospital Springfield Hammons Heart Institute, which opened in 1972. Around the same time, he purchased two rescue helicopters for the hospital to the tune of \$1.2 million. He developed Highland Springs Country Club and golf course. He’s credited as the founder of the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame, which has donated more than \$15 million to area children through its annual golf tournament. It seems that almost everywhere you look, John Q. has left a little something behind to remember him by.



LEADERSHIP

Business Leader Profiles

READY FOR CHANGE

When Bill Turner started in the S&L industry, he had no idea his industry was about to change. But he was ready.

BY TOM CARLSON



▲ Bill Turner (left) helped turn Great Southern Bank into one of the largest banks in the state. His son, Joe (right), followed his father into the industry and now serves as bank president.

▶ The banking business has changed a lot in the 50 years that Great Southern Bank Chairman Bill Turner has been in the industry. Today, competition is fierce and the banking landscape is quickly evolving. Locally, few banks in the country have been more successful than Great Southern in adjusting to the changing world of finance. When Bill Turner took over Great Southern Savings and Loan in 1974, it had 12 employees and one branch. In 2019, the bank is operating 98 branches with 1,200 employees.

The Mansfield native had tried other pursuits before he settled on his banking career. He spent four years working at Kraft Foods Company in Kansas City, then he and his wife, Ann, started a wholesale food business at Lake of the Ozarks until it was destroyed in a fire. When Turner drove to the Small Business Administration office in Kansas City in hopes of securing a loan to rebuild the family business, the SBA had other plans and offered him a job.

Through his work with the SBA, Turner eventually crossed paths with Bill Barclay, who owned Auto Magic car washes. At the time, Barclay was applying for an SBA loan through Citizens Bank in Springfield. Turner approved the loan, and in the process Tom Watkins, who ran the bank, became impressed with Turner and offered him the number three job at the bank.

The lending process was more informal back then. The underwriting criteria boiled down to reviewing a credit report and determining if the borrower was a good risk. Turner says the

No. 1 quality a banker must have is good judgment. “One day this guy came in and wanted to borrow money to buy 200 Holstein steers,” Turner said. “I looked at his credit report, and I told Tom that I did not think we should make the loan. He said, ‘I don’t give a damn. I want you to make the loan.’ So I did. About six months later, an appraiser went to inspect our collateral, and there were only 30 head there. We had to charge it off.” The bank took the hit for the loss, but Watkins took responsibility for it.

A KEEN EYE

In those days, banking was a much more conservative and highly regulated business. Banks couldn’t have branches as they do now, and interest rates were regulated. But banking was changing. To circumvent the rule against a bank having branches, E.H. “Bud” Green came to Springfield and opened separate banks that all used similar underlying ownership. Banking charters were hard to get, but Green hired Gerald Lowther, who was Governor Warren Hearnes’ law school classmate, to apply for charters. With Lowther’s help, Green opened up American National Bank, First City Bank and Empire Bank in the early ‘70s. Green’s bold approach was quickly noticed.

Green wasn’t afraid to try something new, and he shocked many local bankers by staying open on Saturday, Turner remembers. “I parked across the street and started counting the cars. First week there were 50 cars that went through the drive-in, then 100 the next week, then 200, 300 and 400 and so on. So then I went back and talked to Jim and Watkins. Watkins said, ‘Oh my God, we would never do that.’ And I



Photos courtesy Great Southern Bank

showed him the numbers and then he said, ‘Well, by God, we’re going to start opening on Saturdays.’” The move was the beginning of a new chapter in banking.

A few years later, Commerce Bank headquartered in Kansas City purchased Citizens Bank. The bank was run by James Kemper. Turner and Kemper hit it off, and Turner was appointed president of the Commerce Bank in Springfield. In the space of eight years, Turner had advanced from the new loan officer at Citizens to president of the second largest bank in Springfield.

At the same time, Turner’s profile in the community was growing. He was elected to the Springfield school board and he joined the Chamber of Commerce and was elected president of the chamber in 1979. During his year as president, he made a push to recruit new members to the chamber and challenge the old guard’s thinking.

BOLD MOVES

Then in 1974, the position of president of Great Southern Savings and Loan Association (S&L) opened up unexpectedly, and Great Southern board member Bryan Van Hook wanted Turner to take over Great Southern. Turner accepted the offer. In his new job at Great Southern, Turner was creative and willing to try new things. It was among the first financial institutions in the area to offer drive-through teller service, adjustable-rate mortgages, interest bearing checking accounts, tax-sheltered retirement plans and night-time and Sunday banking hours.

Turner’s inventiveness didn’t stop there. Over the next several years, Great Southern opened other lines of business including Great Southern Travel, Great Southern Investments and Great Southern Real Estate. The real estate business was eventually shut down, but the travel business stayed strong, in part thanks to Turner’s wife, Ann, who took it over. He says Ann loved working with 100 or so employees in the travel agency and would take their calls at all times

.....
 ◀ Great Southern was a savings and loan before it changed business models and became a traditional bank in the late 1980s.

of the night. “She would leave at seven in the morning and get home at six at night,” he said. “She’d ask me what I wanted for dinner, and I would say something, and she would say, ‘Well, how about an egg sandwich?’”

LASTING CHANGE

Things were going well in his new job until interest rates skyrocketed in the early 1980s. Unlike banks, S&Ls made 30-year fixed-rate home loans. Banks reserved the right to adjust loan



▲ Turner’s ability to spot new opportunities and his good judgment caught the attention of industry leaders who helped bring Turner into the banking business.

.....
 rates if interest rates rose substantially. S&Ls did not do that, and that practice led to an enormous number of S&L failures in the 1980s.

The S&L business model was simple in those days: Borrow money at one rate and lend it out at a higher rate. It had worked for years, but suddenly S&Ls were having to pay more for their money than they could receive on their home loans. They were quickly going broke.

Each month, the S&Ls finances were quickly deteriorating. “The examiners would come look at our books and rather than concentrate on the quality of our loans, they would tell us how many more months we would be in business if nothing changed,” Turner says. “That will get your attention.”

Turner says his failure to consider the possibility of runaway inflation was probably the biggest mistake of his career. He learned that just because things had worked well in the past, it is no guarantee that it will in the future. But because Great Southern had weathered the S&L crisis, the bank was able to acquire S&Ls and convert them into branches throughout southwest Missouri. The crisis also convinced the board it was time to convert Great Southern from an S&L to a bank and take it public in 1989. At that time, Great Southern had 30 branches with a total of \$489 million in assets.

Following the conversion, the bank continued to grow through the early 2000s. Turner turned over the job of President to his son Joe in 1997 but remained Chairman of the Board. Great Southern was recently featured in a *Bank Director* article titled, “A Valuable Lesson from the Best Bank You’ve Never Heard of.” The article praises Great Southern for producing the fifth best total all-time shareholder return among every publicly traded bank in the U.S., a return of nearly 15,000 percent.

Each share of Great Southern stock cost \$9 in the initial public offering in 1989. Today, it has a value of approximately \$682 per share, based on the August 13, 2019, closing stock price. The bank has done well, and has shared its success with the communities it serves. Great Southern’s name is associated with many not-for-profits in those communities.

Turner, who served on the CoxHealth board of directors for 35 years, donated money through the Turner Foundation to fund The Turner Center at Cox South. Turner says much of his estate will pass to the foundation, and he expects it will continue to support causes in the community that has been so good to him.

Today, Great Southern is a much different institution than the 12-employee S&L at the corner of Walnut and South Avenue in Downtown Springfield. But it is still run by the same principles as it was 45 years ago when Bill Turner took it over.

HEAD ONLINE

 TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION,
 HEAD TO SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL.



HONORING OUR PAST. DESIGNING FOR THE FUTURE.

DESIGNING PURPOSEFUL SETTINGS AROUND THE WAY PEOPLE WORK

No matter how big the project or how small the request, our team works to develop spaces with our knowledge of the leading commercial furniture products and design.

PARTNERSHIP FOR GROWTH

We want your business to do great things. That's why we strive to present product solutions and designs that are as beautiful as they are useful. We help to create a space that inspires your people to take their work to the next level.



GROOMS
OFFICE ENVIRONMENTS

COMMERCIAL FURNITURE • DESIGN • SPACE PLANNING • FLOORING

BUSINESS

BUSINESS PROFILES

Businesses that helped shape our chamber and community

36

O'REILLY AUTO PARTS

38

PAUL MUELLER
COMPANY

40

THE BKD WAY

Photo courtesy O'Reilly Auto Parts

WHAT'S ONLINE

TO READ THE FULL STORIES OF
THE PROFILES INCLUDED IN THIS
PUBLICATION, HEAD ONLINE TO
[SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL](http://SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL).

"Chub" O'Reilly (center)
launched O'Reilly Automotive in
1957 with his father C.F. O'Reilly.
Since then, all four of Chub's
kids have joined the team.

ROAD RUNNERS

O'Reilly Auto Parts might have started small, but it always dreamed big.

BY TOM CARLSON



▶ If you were to prick the finger of a member of the O'Reilly family, they would, in the words of David O'Reilly, “bleed green.”

According to Irish folklore, St. Patrick once used the shamrock to demonstrate the principles of the Trinity to believers: The shamrock has three leaves. We've somehow come to associate St. Patrick's Day and “the luck of the Irish” with a four-leaf clover, but the icon on the O'Reilly Automotive logo is the real deal: It's a shamrock with three leaves.

The O'Reilly Shamrock stands for a company that made its own luck by emphasizing the three values of honesty, integrity and hard work. With that foundation, O'Reilly Automotive has grown into the third largest auto parts company in the United States with more than 5,400 stores in 47 states and more than 82,000 team members.

It is a unique story about a family that spans three generations and 100 years in the business, starting with Grandfather C.F. O'Reilly and followed by his son Chub and then Chub's four children: Charlie, Rosalie, Larry and David.

THE START OF SOMETHING BIG

The story begins in 1914 when C.F. was hired as a salesman for the Kansas City firm Fred Campbell Auto Supply. In 1926, he moved his family to Springfield to assume management of Link Auto Supply stores. Four years later, his 16-year-old son Charles (nicknamed “Chub”) joined the company. Years later, Chub's children would follow his example.

Chub's daughter, Rosalie, remembers working on inventory on school nights years later. “My dad would bring home at night these trays with cards for ordering parts, and I would go through the sales tickets to determine how many spark plugs were sold that day and fill out the cards for ordering more.”

By 1957, most people C.F.'s age were eyeing retirement, but he and Chub had bigger plans.



▶ C.F. and his son, Chub, launched O'Reilly Automotive in 1957. By 1993, the company had grown so much, the family took it public.

They decided to start their own company and brought along 11 fellow employees from Link when they started O'Reilly Auto. From the start, C.F. and Chub adopted policies the company still follows today. They considered workers members of a team, not mere employees. Team members could own stock in the company and promotions were almost entirely from within the company. “The O'Reilly company culture is that you treat everyone like family,” says longtime family banker Rob Fulp.

The O'Reilly family, a longtime supporter of Catholic missions in the area, also adopted the Biblical Golden Rule to treat others as they would want to be treated themselves. Chub, who died in 2005, explained their thinking. “We

▶ The O'Reilly family credits much of the company's success to their team and to the company's focus on treating everyone fairly.

learned about people by observing how others conducted themselves,” he said. “It is the people who make a business what it is. To be successful we must share the fruits of the venture as well as the burden.”

LEARNING TO DELEGATE

Their business model was so successful that four years later in 1961, the O'Reillys formed Ozark Automotive Distributors and began wholesaling to other auto parts stores. Growth of the stores was slow at first because C.F. had imposed a rule that an O'Reilly family member had to be physically at each of their stores. That policy limited the number of stores to two until Chub's oldest son Charlie joined the company and opened a third store in Joplin in 1966. In those early days, Charlie would call on area truck stops and tell them that if they needed a part in the middle of the night to give him a call. He meant it. No matter the hour, Charlie would get out of bed and deliver the part they needed.

In the 1970s when C.F. was nearing 90 years old, the family patriarch decided to slow down and turn over control to his 60-year-old son. Chub instituted a major change by relinquishing absolute control and delegating responsibility to his son Charlie and afterward to Larry, Rosalie and David as they joined the company. Chub's move worked, and growth picked up after the change. “I used my (children's) youth and vitality to move the family business forward,” Chub says. “The experiment worked. Now the company is committed to this decentralized approach.”

As Larry remembers, Chub was like a coach and assigned positions to his children on the

MOTIVE COUNTER



team. “It took a lot of strong communication among the four of us to slot our strengths in the right areas, so we didn’t have four horses trying to run in the same lane,” Larry says.

Chub’s oldest son Charlie eventually became the face of the company. Charlie concentrated on customer service particularly on the retail side. “Great companies all have a compelling competitive advantage—something that you are better at than anyone else,” he says. “Other companies can also have good-looking stores in good locations, good products, etc., but our advantage is in the customer service category delivered by our O’Reilly team members.”

GROWTH OF THE BUSINESS

The next O’Reilly to join the company was Larry who arrived in 1969 after turning down a job with Monsanto. He was a born salesman who could “sell ice cream to Eskimos,” Chub says. Larry called on garages in the southwest Missouri area. In the process, he learned which businesses might be up for sale. Larry, whose

primary focus was sales and marketing, was instrumental in negotiating early acquisitions that set the template for the later mega-mergers.

Larry strongly advocated the Hi/LO and CSK acquisitions that occurred after the company went public in 1993. The scale of these acquisitions catapulted O’Reilly from a regional to a nationwide company. “There were several advantages to the company,” he says. “First, you eliminate a competitor; second you acquire great people who already have customer accounts. It saved a tremendous amount of groundwork. Hi/LO, for example, was in Texas and we were in Oklahoma, so it allowed us to expand our footprint without too much overlap.”

Following Larry, David O’Reilly came in 1972 after a stint with Southwestern Bell. David, who graduated from Drury University with a degree in business and economics, focused early on in converting the old card and

“**It is the people who make a business what it is, and to be successful we must share the fruits of the venture as well as the burden.**”

—“Chub” O’Reilly

ticket inventory system to a computerized point-of-sale process at a time when many competitors were tied to a paper-based system.

Rosalie, also a Drury graduate, joined the team in 1980 and wore many hats. She served as special projects coordinator and vice president of risk management, telecommunications and human resources over the next 20 years.

DREAMING BIG

Originally, O’Reilly was a wholesale parts supplier and didn’t sell parts to the public. But in the 1970s when Walmart and Kmart started selling auto parts to anyone who needed them, O’Reilly followed suit. It also decided it was time to go public, so in 1993, with 122 stores and \$110 million in sales, the company

B BUSINESS
Business Profiles

appeared on the Nasdaq exchange. It was a defining moment for O’Reilly Auto, and it was a great move for the company. The initial stock offering generated \$100 million, and because the money wasn’t borrowed, “we didn’t have to pay it back,” Larry says.

The public offering created a market for the stock owned by O’Reilly team members, and it gave the family working capital to fund accelerated growth. “When you make the decision to go public and grow faster, the only thing that remains constant is change,” Larry says. “Each of us was challenged to take on more. It seemed overnight we had become a big company.”

Some things didn’t change, though. Like his father before him, Chub O’Reilly still had his office at the corporate headquarters into his 90s. He continued to support an equal power sharing arrangement among his children. Charlie replaced Chub as chairman of the board. David and Larry became co-presidents, and Rosalie was executive vice president. Along with a strong management team, the stage was set to take the company to new heights.

Still, the message from management has not changed from the early days. “The family had already recognized that if the company was going to grow, they needed to have dedicated, loyal team members,” says retired, former co-president Ted Wise. Whether acquiring an existing store or hiring staff for a new store, orienting new team members in the O’Reilly culture is job one, Wise says.

Today, O’Reilly arguably is the best in class when it comes to combining its retail and wholesale business. The company operates 28 distribution centers in addition to its 5,400 retail locations. Lots of things have changed since those early days, but one thing remains the same: Customer service is still the top priority, says Rosalie O’Reilly Wooten.

“We train for it and talk about it all the time, about being fair and courteous. This is what has made us successful,” she says. “It’s hard to quantify, but we want every customer to be greeted and to get good service.” In other words, you still have to bleed green to be part of this team.



◀ Chub and his four kids continued to grow O’Reilly Auto Parts. The family uses an equal delegation of power to keep operations running smoothly.

HEAD ONLINE
.....
TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION,
HEAD TO [SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL](http://SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL).

A MAN WITH STAINLESS STANDARDS

Paul Mueller was a tireless worker, a strong leader and a visionary and inventor. He was also incredibly private, but in 2014, Tom Carlson got to interview Mueller 12 months before the visionary died in 2015.

BY TOM CARLSON



Every year, hundreds of businesses start up in the Springfield area and every year, about that same number goes broke. They fail for many reasons: bad management, undercapitalization, poorly conceived business plans, changes in the economy. The list of failures is long compared to the list of companies that succeed. Paul Mueller is on the short-list of those successes. He's also incredibly private. The newspaper archives are light on articles that feature the inventor, engineer, manufacturer and founder of a company that sells products in more than 100 countries. One article titled, "Founder of the Paul Mueller Company One of Springfield's Most Private Individuals," says it all.

But if you know the right people, mostly his daughter Jeanie Morris, you might just be lucky enough to get an interview. "The guy has absolute integrity. I have never met anybody in my life that had higher standards," remembers Dan Manna, who was president of Paul Mueller Company for 24 years. "He is an extremely disciplined individual. It's always do what's right, and avoid what's wrong."

A MAN ON A MISSION

Paul Mueller moved to Springfield from Denver with his parents and sister in 1930. His father, R.G. Mueller, had been hired by the Springfield Gas and Electric Company to manage the utility's conversion to natural gas. After graduating high school in 1934, young Mueller, sensing an opportunity, went to work at the utility in the drafting and engineering department and learned about the new natural gas furnaces.

Looking back and connecting the dots, it seems clear that Mueller always planned to one day go into business for himself. When asked if

he made his plans 10 years in advance, his response was quick, "More than that." With a goal to identify the skills necessary to run a business, Mueller started looking for ways to acquire those skills as efficiently as possible. The idea of attending college and studying courses that were unrelated to that goal was a waste of time and energy in his mind, so with the exception of a short course in air conditioning at Purdue University, Mueller bypassed college.

With a solid understanding of furnaces and air conditioning under his belt, the remaining course in his self-education focused on learning how to sell the product. For that, Mueller went to work for an Ohio company, the Surface Combustion Corporation, which was developing a comprehensive program for its sales force. Mueller took the job in 1938, but the company soon canceled the program. "I was discouraged," he said in a 1969 interview, "but I went to work for Smith Heating Company on Central, and sold furnaces and repair service."

In 1938, Mueller married Nadine Parker and started working as a salesman for Smith Heating for \$25 per week. In two years, he was ready to go into business on his own. He and co-worker Gordon Mann started Mann & Mueller Heating and Sheet Metal Works. They hired just one employee and situated themselves in an old welding building located on the former Heer's parking lot at Campbell and Olive.

Mann oversaw the fabrication, and Mueller handled sales. "I would go door to door asking people if they needed anything repaired—furnaces, furniture, anything," Mueller said.

At first, business was slow. Even making the weekly payroll was an ongoing concern. Muel-

Paul Giles (left) was in charge of Administration and Purchasing in the early 1950s. Paul Mueller (right) ran a tight ship and was involved with almost every part of the biz.

ler said if it had not been for his banker, James A. Jeffries, the business would have failed. But the Citizens Bank president saw something in the young entrepreneur and was there for him when he needed help. Jeffries even helped Mueller buy his first house in Springfield.

Mueller was in the bank one day to pay a bill, and Jeffries told him the bank had a house for sale on Loren Street. He gave Mueller the keys, and suggested he and Nadine take a look at it. "You're dreaming. I couldn't buy a doghouse," Mueller told Jeffries. "He said just go and see if you like it, and we'll work something out." The Muellers followed his suggestion. They looked at the house, got terms they could manage through the bank and moved in.

The banking relationship flourished. Some years later, when Citizens Bank made its first large unsecured commercial loan, the bank made it to the Paul Mueller Company for \$600,000. It was concrete evidence of the reputation and trust Mueller had earned.

FORGING AHEAD

By 1943, Mann's health was failing and Mueller agreed to buy him out. He renamed it the Paul Mueller Company and exercised full control over every aspect of the business until he retired as president in 1976.

After renaming the company, Mueller took a bold step and expanded into poultry processing. This was during World War II, and the military



Paul Mueller credits much of his company's success and growth to his employees who put in long hours and hard work.

needed automated equipment in order to process poultry for large mess halls. The 29-year-old Mueller pivoted from furnace repair and began fabricating a line of chicken pluckers, scalders and eviscerating equipment. Following this, the company expanded into dairy.

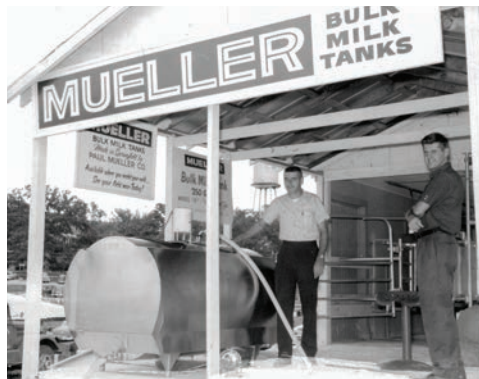
Dairies were modernizing in response to new health regulations that phased out the old milk cans dairy farmers had always used. To stay in business, farmers needed new stainless steel tanks and milk coolers. Mueller had already been fabricating and selling cheese vats, so he added a new production line to meet farmers' demands. The company was growing, and it eventually expanded into stainless steel tanks for breweries and wineries.

Never boastful himself, Mueller praised his workers for the company's success. "I'll put the skill and ingenuity of Missouri workmen and idea men up against those of any other state—and I'll bet we come out on top," he said. Mueller was particularly loyal to early employees like the brothers Joe and Paul White. "The White brothers were his secret in production. They were unbelievable fabrication men," said Dwayne Holden, who worked for Mueller as a salesman after graduating from Drury College.

The Paul Mueller Company—known for having uncompromising standards—kept growing. Mueller was demanding and exacting in all facets of the business. If he wasn't in his office, he was walking through the plant to ensure standards were met. It was his version of MBWA, Management by Walking Around. "He con-

trolled the entire business. He was everywhere and into everything," Manna says. Manna recalls an incident when Mueller inspected a tank still under construction. "Paul looked it over, and it did not meet his standards. He looked at the guy and said, 'you can put your name on it, but you aren't putting my name on it.'"

The company was also known as a place where you were expected to work hard. Mueller set an example and demanded the same from his employees. "We were there early and worked late, and we were there on Saturdays," Holden remembered. Holden co-founded his own fabrication business—Custom Metalcraft—in 1977 and served as its president until he passed away in late 2019. He credited much of his success to the habits he developed as a Mueller salesman.



▲ In the early days of the Paul Mueller Company's growth, it expanded into the production of dairy tanks. That move led the way for the company to expand into other new markets.

Mueller took tremendous pride in the products his company produced. "Those huge beer tanks we built for Anheuser Busch looked like pieces of jewelry on a train," Manna says.

LIFE AT HOME

As dedicated as he was to his business, Mueller was just as devoted to Nadine and their seven children. Dinner was served every night at 6 o'clock. Mueller never missed, and you were expected to dress for dinner. "You couldn't come to dinner with curlers in your hair," his daughter Jeanie recalls. If his daily task list had not been completed, he would go back to work and take a couple of the kids with him, she says.

In the early years, Mueller worked every Saturday and would take the kids to the post office to give Nadine a break. They would pick up the company mail and distribute it so it was there on Monday mornings. When the kids got older, Mueller bought a farm near Strafford that had a freshwater spring so he could fish. It was on the farm that the businessman and inventor turned to other pursuits. He engaged in gardening and woodworking. He once built a hydroponic device for growing tomatoes. He called them "podroponic tomatoes," recalls his friend Don Dailey.

When the inventor turned his creativity to cooking, things got interesting. The Mueller Family Cookbook has a notable entry for Oxtail Soup. First, Mueller made a pot large enough to hold his recipe. His family remembers their father standing on a chair and dropping ingredients into the vat and stirring the contents with a paddle. In 1971, he saw an article in *Sunset* magazine about an adobe oven, so he built one, and the family enjoyed baking bread in it for years.

Mueller was always inventing and experimenting, whether it was with his business, a pot or a batch of tomatoes. He was creative, hard working, focused and generous even in the telling of his own success. When asked about the rise of his company, Mueller credits timing, hard work and, not surprisingly, his employees. But Mueller, who embodies the German proverb that a man should be more than he appears, wouldn't say more. His standards would not permit that.

HEAD ONLINE
.....
TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION,
HEAD TO [SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/
CENTENNIAL](http://SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL).



To increase its success, the team at BKD changed its business model. Senior partners agreed to share their clients with younger members to help train the upcoming team members.

THE BKD WAY

To spur growth, one young accountant made a bold move that paid off. Today, that move still serves as the backbone of the BKD business model.

BY TOM CARLSON

In the 1960s, much like today, most professional firms of lawyers and accountants had a standard business model. The senior partners — the rain-makers—had the client connections and made most of the money, and the younger partners did most of the work. In company parlance, there were finders and grinders.

But this model bears the seeds of its own destruction. Senior partners, having worked their way to the top, want to slow down. Their strength is their client base, and they tend to guard those contacts jealously. Then there is the perspective of the young associates and, in particular, the hard-working ones. They work 55-hour-plus weeks but will only continue at that pace if they believe there will be a payoff. If those prospects dim, the best talent leaves

the firm for greener pastures. The result: Many firms end up with worn-out senior partners and associates who are only B-Team contributors.

Nearly 60 years ago, Baird Kurtz & Dobson (now BKD LLP) was a regional accounting firm with many of these issues. The eight-partner firm generated less than \$500,000 annually. Today, BKD LLP is the 13th-largest accounting firm in the US, and has annual billings of more than \$600 million with 40 offices in 18 states.

The four-story office building at the corner of Saint Louis Street and John Q. Hammons Parkway houses the Springfield office and the national headquarters. The firm has about 2,700 partners and employees; 250 client-service personnel based locally and another 100 located in its national headquarters. CEO, Ted Dickman, commutes to Springfield from Indianapolis.

“
[Ambler]
truly
believed
that if you
put two
and two
together,
you could
make five.”

—Bill Kirkman

Rules of the Trade

OVER THE YEARS, BKD FORMALIZED THE FOLLOWING POLICIES:

READY TO ROCK THE BOAT

Clearly, much has changed in the past 60 years, and that transformation all began in the mind of a young accountant who started with the firm in 1948. His name was Hearld Ambler.

A former partner of Ambler, Dick Pendleton, who practiced in the Springfield office from 1965 to 1979, remembers those early days. “One day, in the early ‘70s, I was in Hearld’s office and he said to me, ‘Dick, I think I have a flair for administration,’” Pendleton recalls. “He saw a need and wanted to fill it.” More specifically, Ambler wanted the firm to change its traditional business model. In order to make the firm more profitable so it could recruit and retain top talent, Ambler believed it had to become more efficient. He believed it had to attract great clients and establish a career path for its accountants. To accomplish all that, he had to persuade fellow professionals to cede their authority and give up their security of personal client relationships.

At the time, BKD had offices in Joplin, K.C. and Springfield. Ambler knew if he could get the Springfield team to follow his suggestions, the other offices would take notice. Either through persuasion or exhaustion, the Springfield office eventually ceded administrative control to Ambler and growth followed. “After about 10 years, people started noticing the growth and questioning what was going on in the Springfield office,” Ambler says. “I knew that the secret was to get top-notch people to come and stay.” With the support of his partners, Ambler became the de facto CEO and standardized the new operation of the office.

“We set up a central accounting system and instituted rules about work habits,” he says. He persuaded his partners to overcome the natural human impulse to protect their financial security and start granting younger accountants access to their best clients. They had to agree to retire and make room at the top. For that to work well, the senior partners had to train the associates to replace them.

RECRUITING TOP TALENT

Bill Kirkman was there in the early days. “[Ambler] truly believed that if you put two and two together, you could make five,” he says. “He saw that if you were good at this, and Joe was good at that, and I’m really good at managing, then collectively we can make the firm grow.”

To bring in top talent, BKD started offering extensive job training and experience right off

BKD WILL RECRUIT, TRAIN AND RETAIN TOP TALENT.

SENIOR PARTNERS WILL TRAIN YOUNG ASSOCIATES TO TAKE OVER THEIR JOBS.

THE FIRM WILL HOLD FEWER MEETINGS TO HANDLE ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES IN ORDER TO REDUCE WASTED TIME; THAT TASK WILL BE PERFORMED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE PARTNER (CHOSEN BY HIS PEERS).

PARTNERS MUST RETIRE AT 65 TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

the bat. Generally, within two years, new associates will have specialized in a particular area. Still, the odds of making partner in 12 to 14 years are small. Luckily, the firm has learned that those who might not go for the partner brass ring still find satisfying careers. Some will stay as a non-partner accountant, and others land such jobs as chief financial officers in companies that are BKD clients.

As the Springfield office continued to thrive, a common question would arise at BKD’s other locations. “Why are those guys in Springfield doing better than we are?” The short answer was simple: The Springfield team was practicing “The BKD Way.” They weren’t working more

hours, but they also weren’t wasting time in meetings. It was all part of Ambler’s new model, and it was attractive to outside companies as well. Merging with BKD became an attractive option for other CPA firms, and BKD grew its footprint during Ambler’s tenure in the ‘70s and ‘80s by merging with other firms in Nebraska, Oklahoma and Kentucky.

ADOPTING A NEW PLAYBOOK

Ambler retired in 1986 with the BKD model firmly in place. Growth picked up with new CEO Jim Glauser, who expanded the firm’s emphasis on the health care industry. Glauser added to the BKD culture with his emphasis on confronting problems head-on and early rather than later. “If you’ve got to eat a frog, don’t look at him too long,” is a Glauser saying recorded in a book about the firm’s culture called *The BKD Experience: Unmatched Client Service*.

Bill Fingland succeeded Glauser and became the CEO in 1997. During his 10-year tenure, the firm doubled in size. It was during his time that the firm developed a book detailing the elements that constitute the BKD culture. Now in its third edition, the 80-page book is given to every employee in the firm.

It even receives praise from luminaries including Super Bowl champion quarterback Joe Theismann. “This isn’t just a book about a firm. It’s not a book about accounting. It’s a book about life. It’s a book about life’s experiences.”

In the past 40 years, there has been a consensus at BKD on the firm principles. Hire the best people you can, train them to take over your job, constantly create opportunity by offering unmatched client service and require mandatory retirement so you are always making way for the next generation.

Fingland sums it up as a matter of values. “You have to be able to play on three levels,” he says. “1) Client service—and we were at the top of that game; 2) the firm had to do well because you had to perpetuate what you were fortunate enough to inherit and 3) give back to your industry and your community in time and money. You have to pay it forward.”

HEAD ONLINE

TO READ THE UNABRIDGED VERSION, HEAD TO SPRINGFIELDCHAMBER.COM/CENTENNIAL.

Looking Back, Moving Forward.



We celebrate the Springfield Chamber's century of supporting economic growth and local businesses.

From one Springfield institution to another, congratulations and thank you for 100 years of progress in our community.

Guaranty  **Bank**

Your Business. Your Money. Your Bank.

833.875.2492 / gbankmo.com



MEMBER FDIC

#loveSGF



2020 CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

ROBIN ROBESON

The chamber's members and its leaders have never shied away from influencing the future.

Right now, we share a collective sense of momentum when it comes to the investments we need to make as a community in order to strengthen our identity and ensure we realize our shared vision of making the Springfield area the most thriving region in the state and in the Midwest.

Our civic, state and federal leaders will be empowered to act on larger impactful plans and projects if they have our support. Thankfully, the chamber's member-driven processes will continue to help us gather input, analyze and arrive at the sound decisions and positions that will result in a stronger job market, a larger workforce and greater investment in the Ozarks region.

As we chart a course for the future, we also have to continue focusing on the day-to-day work it takes over the long term to build a business-friendly environment. The results can be incremental and sometimes challenging to communicate.

The bottom line is that to strengthen the creation of high-quality, family-supporting jobs here, we have to be a skills-rich region. Better jobs require certain skill sets. The more we can do to equip people with in-demand skills, the more we can build a sustainable trajectory for upward mobility. It empowers people, and it opens up more opportunity for our employers here.

I've learned about some very successful best practices on our Community Leadership Visits. At the same time, visiting other cities has solidified my resolve that we have the assets, innovation and risk-taking spirit necessary to beat our competition when it comes to recruiting talent to Springfield and increasing our working population. That's at the heart of our strategy for the future—jobs follow people. We must have the vibrant place that attracts more people which in turn fuels our ability to attract and expand quality jobs in our area.

Chamber members have always stepped up to the plate to support the actions that will shape a more prosperous future for all those who live here in the Springfield area. I am proud to call this my home, and I love living and working in the Springfield region. At the start of the next century in the chamber's legacy of leadership, I know I can count on you to own that pride, and we can work together to take some big steps into what I see as a very bright future.





LOOKING AHEAD

Celebrating 100 Years and more to come

THE NEXT 100 ▶ YEARS

To celebrate the chamber's 100-year anniversary, three of its future leaders—Kristin Carter, the 2018 chairman of The Network, Paden Wilcox, the 2019 chairman of The Network, and Ryan Sivill the 2020 chairman of The Network—talk about what attracted them to get involved, where they see Springfield and the chamber headed in the future and the energy they see in Springfield's class of young professionals.

BY ETTIE BERNEKING

ETTIE BERNEKING: How did each of you get involved with The Network?

KRISTIN CARTER: This is part of my love story with Springfield. I'm from St. Louis and moved here in 2011, and one of my dear friends said I really needed to come to The Network, so I started coming to events. Six months later, I applied to be on leadership council.

PADEN WILCOX: My boss's wife started The Network 10 years before I started at the company, so my boss was very involved in it. I had just moved back to town and was looking for a way to get plugged in and meet other young professionals. I really loved The Network and the mission behind it. Six months later I applied for a leadership position in the group.

RYAN SIVILL: I started at BKD right after college, so I started my career here and was looking for ways to get involved in the community. My mentor Gary Schafer told me about The Network (he happened to be the first chairman of The Network). It was almost a decade later that I applied for leadership council.

BERNEKING: What's your big pitch for The Network to young professionals who haven't joined yet?

K.C.: One of the things that stuck out to me is you think it's going to be about networking, but it's about so much more than that. It's about engaging young professionals in the development of Springfield. It's easier to make an impact here, and you feel like you have a say in Springfield.

R.S.: We were kind of joking about this earlier, but one thing that gets people excited in Springfield is how leadership is looking at young professionals to help guide where we go the next 100 years. We are at the table, so what do we want Springfield to look like for our kids and grandkids?

P.W.: The Network has earned that seat at the table. It started as just a group for young professionals, but it put us where senior leadership saw us as a talented pool of people. Now they'll come to The Network as a resource.

K.C.: Also kudos to the chamber because they



had the foresight to reserve a seat on the chamber board for the chairman of The Network, so you can be directly involved in what the chamber board is doing.

BERNEKING: What role do you think the chamber plays in Springfield's growth?

P.W.: The chamber serves as the glue that brings the different organizations together. It brings the city, the public and the business community together.

K.C.: It's the trusted convener.

R.S.: Those on the chamber board of directors just get it.

BERNEKING: You've all served on The Network leadership team, so what developments in town are you most proud to have been involved with?

P.W.: For me, I go back to Uber and the conversation we helped start about allowing ride sharing to come to Springfield. I don't think people weren't going to come to Springfield because we didn't have Uber, but it was one of the many things on the list of why Springfield was behind the times. Through The Network, we talked with City Council, and now we have ride sharing. I think about that all the time. That's something that really impacts a lot of

Photo by Brad Zweerink



Kristin, Paden and Ryan joined The Network as a way to plug into the Springfield community. As it happened, The Network allowed them to make a difference in the local business scene and help change local policies.

people's lives, and it wasn't here two years ago. That's a big one for me.

K.C.: For me it was the OTC ballot initiative during my term. Voter turnout rates were very low, and the average age of voters was in the mid 60s. Through our grass-root efforts, we made an impact in voter turnout and we have a hashtag that people still use. It lives on. It just started this excitement, and when the issue passed it reaffirmed the effort you put in.

R.S.: You don't have to say, "I think it made an impact." You've heard it did have an impact. Folks involved know you had an impact.

K.C.: That's true, and now other groups like Friends of SPS come to The Network and ask for our help when they need to get voter support on upcoming issues.

R.S.: I'm optimistic that my moment is yet to come, but I'm excited for The Network to be out front about what we want our city to be and what we want it to look like. We're trying to retain young professionals in Springfield, so I don't think we can shy away from the possibilities that are out there.

BERNEKING: What do you see as the next big focus for the chamber and for Springfield in the next 100 years?

P.W.: For me, the next 100 years need to focus on making Springfield a beautiful place to live, work and play and not just make it good enough. To not set out to build something that gets the job done but make something that we're proud of. And as a community, we need to make people feel more welcome and work on diversity and inclusion.

K.C.: To illustrate Paden's point, one quote I heard was if the St. Louis Arch was in Springfield, it would be 6 feet tall. Sometimes we're so focused on the resources it takes to get a project done, we don't think boldly. And I think in the next 100 years, we have got to think big. We just have to set our sights higher.

R.S.: We probably need to spend some time telling our story. We all love Springfield, but we have to get better at telling people why. And really, we have this awesome story—we have the outdoors and large national businesses headquartered here. We have incredible public education here. If we craft the message and tell that story, that will lead people here.

K.C.: It's not bad to humble brag. Ryan, can you tell that same exact message at your 2020 Network speech?

R.S.: That's the 2020 mission!

The Network

FOUNDED
2007

FOR

Young professionals 40 and younger

NUMBER OF MEMBERS

NEARLY 500

FOCUS

THE NETWORK has become the go-to voice for young leaders and professionals in the Springfield community. Members are often sought out for openings on local boards and commissions and are routinely recognized in area publications for their professional and philanthropic efforts.



LOOKING AHEAD

Celebrating 100 Years and more to come

BY THE NUMBERS

Over the past decade, the chamber has managed hundreds of leads with businesses looking to expand or relocate. Working with our partners, many of these leads have become successful projects that have created new jobs, new income and new investment—the cornerstones of economic growth. Each day, the Springfield region competes with other communities for jobs and talent. As the chamber enters the next century, that competitive landscape continues to evolve, and the unique intersection of job creation, population growth and quality of place is increasingly important. To attract and retain more people and new jobs, the chamber continues to strengthen its focus on talent development, retention and attraction as well as investing in the assets that make this a desirable place to live, work, play and learn. The following numbers show examples of how the chamber is continuing that focus.

6,199

NEW JOBS ▶

In the last 10 years from 2010 to 2019, the Springfield Business Development Corporation (SBDC), the economic development arm

of the chamber, has managed projects creating 6,199 new jobs in the Springfield region. These projects have resulted in adding \$221,256,613 to the annual payroll (non-inflation adjusted) and \$664,235,000 in capital investment (non-inflation adjusted).



300

ATTENDEES

300 attended the inaugural edition of SGForum, a half-day summit just for SGF YPs. The 2020 edition is moving to a larger venue to meet the demand for this purpose-driven program featuring inspiring keynote speakers, mini sessions about community, personal and professional development and more.

900+

COLLEGE STUDENTS

The Network for Springfield’s Young Professionals presented to more than 900 college students during 2019 about why Springfield is a great place to live, work and play. The Network has played a key role in the chamber’s efforts to attract, engage and retain young professionals in Springfield.

7,725,360

TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

From December 4, 2018, to December 4, 2019, SBDC’s talent attraction initiative marketing campaign placed ads on social media platforms targeting individuals working in high-demand fields as well as those who’ve lived here in the past. During its first year, the campaign reached nearly 2 million people, made more than 7.7 million impressions and received 47,000+ click-throughs to the talent attraction website, LiveInSpringfieldMO.com.



Springfield

Area Chamber of Commerce

1919 // 2019

CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION



CENTENNIAL PUBLICATION SUPPORTERS



THE LEONARD FAMILY



PAST CHAIRMEN

Thank you to all of the men and women who have volunteered their time as chair of the board over the past 100 years.

1924 – W. A. MCALEE
 1925 – J.F. WELLS
 1926 – J. W. BROWNLOW
 1927 – JOHN S. FARRINGTON
 1928 – J. W. BROWNLOW
 1929 – JOHN L. MCCORMACK
 1930 – S. F. FREEMAN
 1931 – S. F. FREEMAN
 1932 – BENJAMIN F. MCDONALD
 1933 – JOHN T. WOODRUFF
 1935 – JOHN T. WOODRUFF
 1936 – LESTER E. COX
 1937 – LESTER E. COX
 1938 – JEWELL E. WINDLE
 1939 – JEWELL E. WINDLE
 1940 – LEWIS E. MEADOR
 1941 – LEWIS LUSTER
 1942-43 – ARTHUR M. CURTIS
 1944-46 – W. WALLIS SMITH
 1947 – WILL W. JOHNSON
 1948 – H.A. BAKER
 1949 – H.A. BAKER
 1950 – JOHN K. HULSTON
 1951 – JOHN K. HULSTON

1952 – WILL C. JOHNSON
 1953 – WILL C. JOHNSON
 1954 – JOHN K. HULSTON
 1955 – DURWARD G. HALL
 1956 – DURWARD G. HALL
 1957 – EUGENE F. JOHNSON
 1958 – C. HAROLD GURLEY
 1959 – EUGENE A. MARTIN, JR.
 1960 – DEL E. CAYWOOD
 1961 – GEORGE T. FOX
 1962 – THOMAS H. BAIRD, SR.
 1963 – SI SMITH
 & G. PEARSON WARD
 1964 – G. PEARSON WARD
 1965 – DON C. DAILEY
 1966 – RICHARD C. GRAYSON
 1967 – KEITH M. DAVIS
 1968 – W. RAY DANIEL
 1969 – S. H. CLOW
 & DAVID A. RYDEEN
 1970 – RAY F. ATON
 1971 – DON R. HANDLEY
 1972 – JAMES H. BROWN
 1973 – WILLIAM V. TURNER

1974 – JIM C. JONES
 1975 – LAWRENCE M. OLLIS
 1976 – DONALD L. RICH
 1977 – LON R. MCLAUCHLIN
 1978 – H. DUANE PEMBERTON
 1979 – CHRIS W. NATTINGER
 1980 – DON WESSEL
 1981 – WALTER GERMAN
 1982 – CARL E. YATES
 1983 – CARL EDWARD DECK
 1984 – GENE RUBLE
 1985 – KENNETH L. CARTER
 1986 – MICHAEL J. WILLIAMSON
 1987 – BILL BUCKNER
 1988 – ALLEN CASEY
 1989 – W. CURTIS GRAFF
 1990 – WILLIAM E. KIRKMAN
 1991 – GORDON L. KINNE
 1992 – ROBERT E. ROUNDTREE
 1993 – FRANK M. EVANS, III
 1994 – JAMES E. STREET
 1995 – FRED J. LUDEN
 & CHARLIE GRAAS
 1996 – CHARLIE GRAAS

1997 – JIM JURA
 1998 – NIKKI SELLS
 1999 – JOE TURNER
 2000 – MARY KAY MEEK
 2001 – ROBERT H. SPENCE
 2002 – DAVID AGEE
 2003 – RICHARD OLLIS
 2004 – TODD PARNELL
 2005 – RANDELL WALLACE
 2006 – MIKE BRIGGS
 2007 – ANN MARIE BAKER
 2008 – DOUG PITT
 2009 – ANDREW LEAR
 2010 – TIM ROSENBURY
 2011 – JERRY A. HARMISON, JR.
 2012 – JOHN WILSON
 2013 – BRIAN FOGLE
 2014 – JEFF SCHRAG
 2015 – TOM HILMES
 2016 – DEBRA SHANTZ HART
 2017 – JOHN WANAMAKER
 2018 – DOUG NEFF
 2019 – JEFF CHILDS

PAST SPRINGFIELDIAN AWARD RECIPIENTS

Congratulations to the hardworking Springfield residents who have won the Springfieldian Award. Our city is better because of you.

1957 – DURWARD G. HALL
 1958 – ED BAXTER
 1959 – EUGENE F. JOHNSON
 1960 – LESTER E. COX
 1961 – G. PEARSON WARD
 1962 – MAX VAN HOOK
 1963 – E. L. ANDERSON
 1964 – THOMAS H. BAIRD, JR.
 1965 – E. A. MARTIN, JR.
 1966 – J.H.G. COOPER
 1967 – JAMES A. JEFFRIES, SR.
 1968 – FLAVIUS FREEMAN
 1969 – DON C. DAILEY
 1970 – G. FRANK KNOX
 1971 – WILLIAM E. EVERHEART
 1972 – L.E. MEADOR

1973 – DEL E. CAYWOOD
 1974 – THOMAS F. ZIMMERMAN
 1975 – JOE KUKLENSKI, JR.
 1976 – JAMES F. PAYNE
 1977 – JAMES K. COOK
 1978 – JOHN K. HULSTON
 1979 – WILLIAM V. TURNER
 1980 – JOHN Q. HAMMONS
 1981 – LESTER L. COX
 1982 – C. ARCH BAY
 1983 – RALPH FOSTER
 1984 – BILL HENDERSON
 1985 – GENE EVERETT
 1986 – LEE MCLEAN
 1987 – DON WESSEL
 1988 – ED DECK

1989 – JOHN E. MOORE, JR.
 1990 – DORSEY E. LEVELL
 1991 – RAY F. ATON
 1992 – MARY KAY MEEK
 1993 – MICHAEL J. WILLIAMSON
 1994 – CHRIS W. NATTINGER
 1995 – ROBERT E. ROUNDTREE
 1996 – BEN A. PARNELL
 1997 – CHARLIE O'REILLY
 1998 – JAN HORTON
 1999 – KENNETH L. CARTER
 2000 – JACK STACK
 2001 – JOHN L. MORRIS
 2002 – TOM FINNIE
 2003 – ROSEANN BENTLEY
 2004 – ROBERT H. SPENCE

2005 – JIM ANDERSON
 2006 – RALPH MANLEY
 2007 – KENNETH MEYER
 2008 – ANNIE BUSCH
 2009 – BILL FOSTER
 2010 – BRIAN FOGLE
 2011 – WILLIAM DARR
 2012 – MARY BETH O'REILLY
 2013 – GORDON ELLIOTT
 2014 – TOM CARLSON
 2015 – JOHN D. BENTLEY, MD
 2016 – WILLIAM E. KIRKMAN
 2017 – PATTI PENNY
 2018 – SAM F. HAMRA
 2019 – GORDON L. KINNE

BUILDING OUR SPRINGFIELD OF TOMORROW, TODAY.

WE WERE A START-UP IN
SPRINGFIELD ONCE, TOO.

*WHETHER YOU'RE A START-UP OR A
SUCCESSFUL SMALL BUSINESS, WE
UNDERSTAND YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT
AND CAN HELP TURN YOUR DREAMS
INTO YOUR NEXT SUCCESSES.*

...

#LOVESGF



OLDMISSOURIBANK.COM

417.869.9000



**Love what you've done
with the place.**



There's No Place Like 417.

Proudly telling stories, supporting local businesses and cheering on 417-land for more than 20 years.

417
MAGAZINE