

CENTRAL ILLINOIS **Business**

October | November 2021

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this year's
group of
young, area
professionals
for their
achievements,
leadership and
community
involvement.

**FORTY
UNDER**

40
2021

Man of the Year

Brandon Chandler

Woman of the Year

Cessily Thomas

TOP LAWYERS

CHAMPAIGN-URBANA AREA

BASED UPON A SURVEY OF THEIR PEERS



These **LEADING LAWYERS** have been recommended by their peers to be among the **TOP LAWYERS** in Illinois.

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These **EMERGING LAWYERS** have been identified by their peers to be among the **TOP LAWYERS** in Illinois who are age 40 or younger OR who have been admitted to the practice of law for 10 or fewer years.

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**From the
editor's desk**



Among the countless celebrations that were stolen by the pandemic over the last year-and-a-half was our annual shindig where we celebrate that year's class of Forty Under 40.

Frankly, it's one of my favorite events on the calendar as we get to tip our cap to the many people who make living in Central Illinois just so special.

We were determined not to let that happen again.

So, this year's 40 community leaders — who hail from Monticello, Danville, Fisher and many points in between — will be honored at the Virginia Theatre on Nov. 1.

We'll let them walk across the stage for some well-earned recognition.

Now that's something to celebrate.

—Mike

Mike Goebel is the Managing Editor of The News-Gazette. Reach him by email at mgoebel@news-gazette.com or by phone at 217-393-8254.



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would like to congratulate
Wesley Hanner, on his
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apparent in both his real
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**FORTY UNDER
40 2021**

Central Illinois Business magazine thanks its Forty Under 40 panel of judges



**Kevin
Monahan**

President,
Monahan Partners, Inc.

Kevin serves as President of Monahan Partners, Inc., an OEM supplier in the Janitorial and Foodservice industry. Kevin is the fourth generation in the small family business that as existed for 99 years.

An Arcola native, Kevin returned to the family business 8 years ago where he works with his father Pat, among others. Kevin formerly served as President of the Arcola Food Pantry and currently serves on the Arcola Community and Economic Development group.

Kevin founded the KFM Cancer Classic, a non-profit that proudly donates 100% of its contributions toward the cause with no donations going toward administration fees. In 21 years, it has generated and donated over \$420,000 toward cancer research, education, advocacy, and patient services.

Kevin is a proud member of the World Famous Lawn Rangers of Amazing Arcola and still reads a hard copy of The News-Gazette.



**Cindy
Somers**

Franchise Owner,
Spherion Staffing

Cindy was raised in Champaign, attended Indiana University and returned in 1992 to work in the family business. She has received the 2018 Innovation Celebration Management Award, 2012 Athena Award and 2011 CUSF Community Impact Award. Spherion has won the United Way

Spirit of Caring Award 2014, The Chamber's Small Business of the Year 1996. They have also won numerous Spherion awards for outstanding performance. Cindy is very involved in the community. Currently she serves on the Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club Foundation board, is a member of Champaign West Rotary Club, a United Way contributor. Over the years she has donated her time and resources to many organizations in Champaign County.



**Shandra
Summerville**

Cultural, Linguistic Competence
Coordinator, Champaign County
Mental Health and Developmental
Disabilities Boards

Born and raised in C-U, Shandra returned after residing in Pine Bluff, Ark., for six years where she worked as a Field Director for the Girl Scouts and served as director of an Adult Day Center Facility.

She is specialized in cultural competence training and development for organizations that want to expand their capacity to become culturally responsive.

She currently serves at the President of the Rotary Club of Champaign and is involved with NAACP Champaign County Branch; United Way Emerging Community Leaders Alumni Committee, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, The Hope Center Leaders Cabinet through the Vineyard Church, The Canaan Development Foundation SAFE House Steering Committee; Illinois Public Media Community Advisory Committee.

In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, volunteering, learning new "things to do" in her community, spending time with family, and listening to music.

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**News-Gazette
MEDIA**

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

CESSILY THOMAS | 38

Teacher, **Centennial High School**



Story and Photos Anthony Zilis

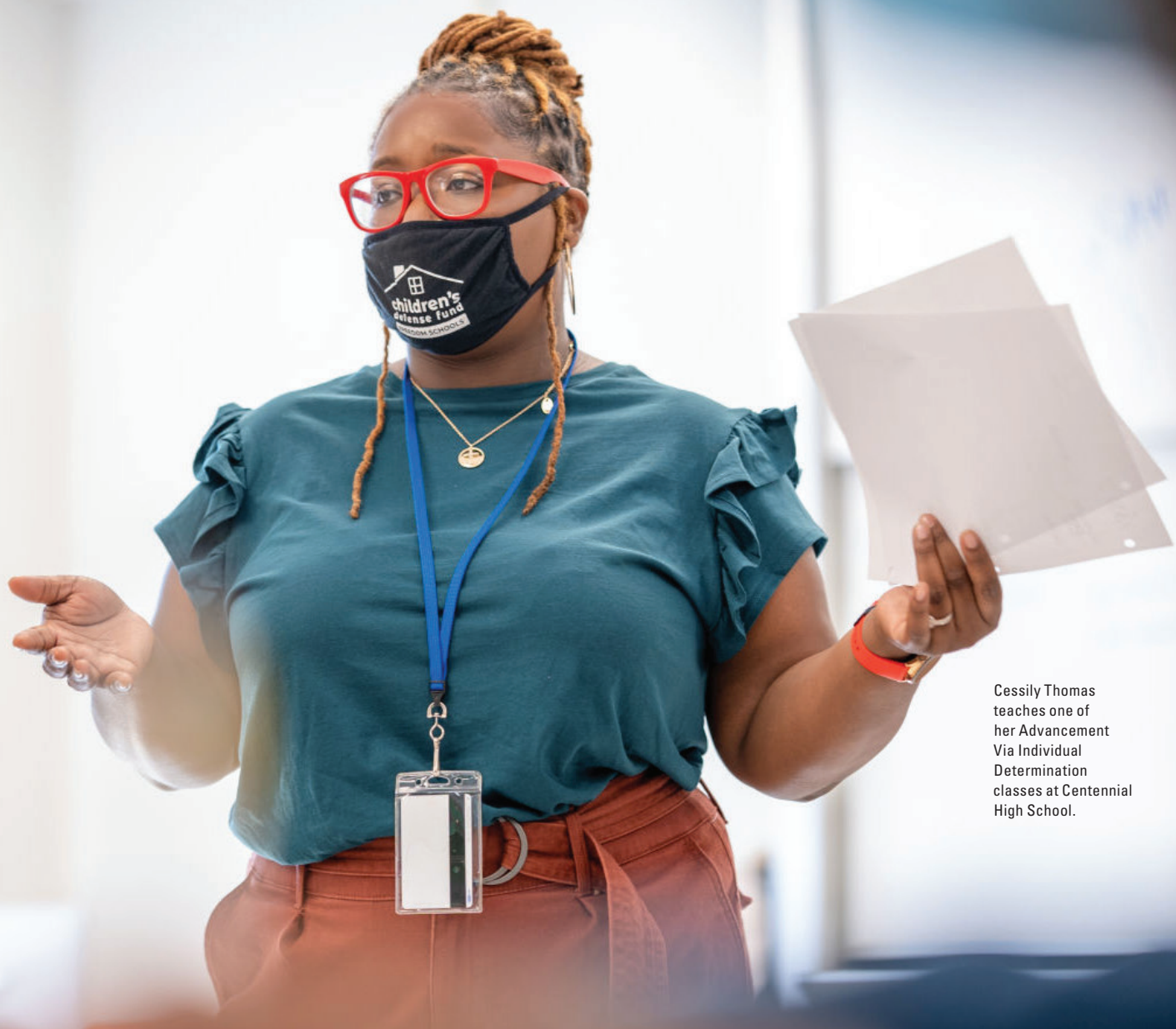
Cessily Thomas didn't plan on spending a month of her summer in a classroom, but when the Centennial teacher sees that her help is needed, she rarely turns down the opportunity.

Last summer, her son's site at CU Freedom Schools ran into logistical issues that nearly made it impossible for the literacy and cultural enrichment program to take place. Thomas, though, wouldn't let that happen.

"When they said, 'We might have to close, This might be our last week,' I was like, 'No, what do you need?'" said Thomas, who took over as the on-site project director. "And I started working that following week. It was just like, 'Nope, we're going to do this because our kids need this, and we're not going to just not do it because of logistics.'"

Thomas spends her work days and her free time fulfilling the needs of others.

As a teacher and site coordinator for Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Thomas prepares students for college and life after high school. As the founder



Cessily Thomas teaches one of her Advancement Via Individual Determination classes at Centennial High School.

of the Champaign-Urbana Black Teachers Alliance, she makes sure Black teachers in Champaign and Urbana, which make up a small fraction of the districts' teachers, have a place to speak about shared experience and to support each other. As a youth pastor, a speech team coach, the leader of a Champaign-based cohort of adult Eastern Illinois education students, the organizer of a play group for neighborhood kids, and more, she takes on roles that allow her to help, guide, and support others.

Thomas, though, doesn't want to give her students the impression that she had life figured out early.

She tells them about her first year of college at Illinois State University, where she had no idea she was supposed to buy expensive books and didn't have the necessary habits to survive. She failed out that first year, and while she was embarrassed at the time, she makes sure her students know about her experience.

She sees her role as providing students with the knowledge that some take for granted.

"I tell them, 'You don't have to go out there not knowing. I'm not going to let you do that,'" she said. "I didn't have a teacher or a counselor to tell me, 'Okay, when you go to school, this is what you should do, this is how you should

From the nominator

"Cessily is dedicated to empowering the youth of today and giving them a voice which otherwise may not be heard. She continually pushes her students and the youth in the community to reach for the stars and realize their purpose and dreams on this journey we call life. She comes from a long line of respected educators, entrepreneurs, and service-oriented community leaders and has created a safe space for many youth and students alike. Despite the many adversities she has faced, she has prevailed in her personal life, professional life, and her spiritual life all while being a leader in the community and steering the lives of so many others." — **Shanece Warren**, Champaign Unit 4 School District

Congratulations!



Krystle has been and continues to be our company's cornerstone in building out our entire administrative process. Through her experience in higher education, she managed and created an entire college program with nothing but an idea. Krystle was able to leverage those experiences to help our company grow. Her courage and creativity are true assets to any team she finds herself on.

As her husband, I find myself in awe watching my wife's continual growth in the world of entrepreneurship. She's literally the life blood and heart of our company and I'm proud of her many achievements. So from the Autumn Freight Inc team and from your husband, we want to say thank you, Mrs. Autumn Freight!



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Cessily Thomas teaches 'the hidden curriculum' — with the goal of getting her students at Centennial High School ready for college.

study. Yes, you're going to have to buy books. Yes, they cost a lot.' ... I think one of the reasons my students and I get so close is that I don't mind sharing my experiences, I don't mind sharing my failures with them, because the way I see it, I didn't go through this stuff for nothing."

Thomas, of course, bounced back. She went back to school to become a Spanish teacher, this time at Eastern Illinois University. After graduating and teaching in the Chicago suburbs, the Champaign native came back to her hometown 13 years ago, where she initially taught Spanish and AVID.

While she enjoyed teaching Spanish, Thomas gravitated toward AVID. In her view, she sees her role as providing students with the information she wishes she knew heading into college for the first time. Four years ago, she moved to

solely teaching AVID and is the program's site coordinator at Centennial.

"I call it the hidden curriculum," she said. "It teaches kids how to do school. Some things that may come easily or naturally or that are passed down to students in some families are not always the same, with skills like time management and study skills like how to study, how to take notes, how to ask questions."

During a class in early September, Thomas spoke with a class of juniors, asking them about their

goals and the plans and actions that will help them achieve them.

One student responded that they'd like to own their own apartment.

"That sounds like a goal, until you've got to pay your bills," Thomas responded. "Stay home as long as you can. Okay?"

The information that she provides to her students every day is knowledge she sorely needed when she graduated high school, just like she fulfills the needs of students and teachers in other ways.

"I feel like if I've gone through something or if I have a similar experience or if I have expertise in the area where there's a need, then I'm going to do it," she said. "I think that could be from my upbringing in church. If you feel like something's missing, then you're probably supposed to be doing it. If you're like, 'Oh my Gosh, the kids really need this,' then God's calling you to do that."



MAN OF THE YEAR

BRANDON CHANDLER | 39

Owner, **Chandler Concrete & Excavation**; Owner, **Ingold's Meat & Deli**; Owner, **Lucky Laundry**

Brandon Chandler stops to make a phone call from a scissor lift outside Ingold's Meat & Deli in downtown Fisher.




Story Kevin Barlow Photos Robin Scholz

While a sixth-grade student at Fisher Elementary School, Brandon Chandler's class was in the midst of a lesson about future goals and what the students would like to be as adults. The teacher threw out one possibility, and it was that day that Chandler decided that he wanted to be an entrepreneur when he grew up.

"I always liked the definition of 'entrepreneur' because the definition is so loose," he said. "It means you can do whatever you want, as long as you are making money. That's what I wanted to do."

The family had always been in the concrete business, and after a couple of night classes at Parkland College and some time spent in Buffalo, N.Y., learning the family business, Chandler started Chandler Concrete Company in the Foosland/Fisher area. That was

A full-page photograph of a man, Brandon Chandler, wearing a white hard hat with a logo, safety glasses, an orange long-sleeved shirt, and blue jeans. He is using a large circular saw to cut through a piece of metal on a gravel surface. A cloud of dust is rising from the cut. In the background, there is a brick building and a white pickup truck. The sun is bright in the upper left corner, creating a lens flare effect.

Brandon Chandler cuts a piece of metal while working at Gibson Area Memorial Hospital in Gibson City.

enough to keep him busy, but Chandler needed more.

“I am high-strung,” he said. “I can’t sit still. When you get a little bit of success from hard work, you can get kind of nervous and you don’t want it to stop so you keep working. You don’t want to lose it and it gives you a great deal of satisfaction to know you have earned it at the end of the day. And when you have a community behind you, you feel like you can do anything and so you just keep moving forward.”

Which is why Chandler has been named the “Forty Under 40 Man of the Year.”

Three years ago and after 10 years of operating his own concrete business, Chandler and his wife, Carissa, re-opened Ingold’s Meat and Deli, a longtime Fisher grocery store that had closed. While working on that project, a friend told Chandler that the community needed a laundromat, too. Not sure if a standalone laundromat would work in a town of 1,900 people, the Chandlers decided to build a laundromat with an attached bar and gaming facility. Lucky Laundry, a micro laundromat with four washers and four dryers with a gaming/bar area, opened two years ago in the main

business district block near the grocery store.

Carissa is an accountant for Caterpillar, and helps Chandler with his business ideas.

"She is awesome," he adds. "She is an outgoing little spitfire and is very, very smart. Whenever I come up with a new idea, she pencils it out and lets me know if it is financially feasible. It's been a great partnership."

The two met in high school.

"But she wouldn't date me until I was out of college," he said. "I guess I was too wild for her and she waited for me to calm down. But we have three beautiful kids (ages 10, seven and three) — we had two boys at first, and then wanted to try for a little girl and we got her. We are so blessed beyond our dreams. It really is about health over money. As long as my family is healthy, everything will fall into place."

Chandler said he loves the small-town atmosphere.

"Everybody knows everybody, and as a young man that was kind of annoying," he said. "But now, as an adult with your own children, it is quite comforting."

Devoted to Fisher, Chandler recognized the need for a grocery store in the community located 15 miles north of Champaign-Urbana.

From the nominator

"Raised in Fisher, he went to school through Fisher schools and genuinely wants Fisher to grow. As a member of the Village Board of Fisher, I have seen first-hand Brandon's vision of our village." — **Debbie Estes, Brenda Keith Realty**

"I fell into the construction business because of our family, which has always done construction in one way or another since I can remember," he said. "So that came naturally. But when Ingold's closed down, I looked at it as a great opportunity to break out of the mold and do the entrepreneur thing."

Originally opened in 1926 by brothers-in-law Harve Ingold and Jesse Heiser, it had been operated by the same family for nearly

a century. Unable to find a buyer, they closed it in 2018.

But Chandler's own grocery store experience was limited.

"I worked for the Mahomet IGA for three days while in high school," he said. "I couldn't stand working inside. I had always mowed yards or baled hay, something outside. I went nuts working inside and couldn't stand it."

But while in Buffalo learning the business from family members, Chandler learned how to deal with inside projects. During the winter, he worked inside major development projects in downtown Buffalo.

"It was the messy, sweaty hard work that I liked," he said. "So when we bought Ingold's which was a 110-year-old building, I was ecstatic because there was a basement to fix and plaster to remove and windows to redo. I still got my fill of

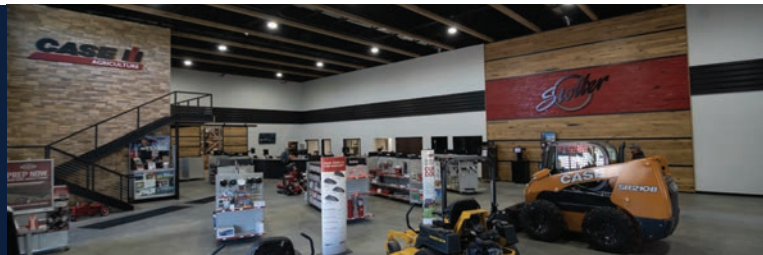
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the dirty work even though it was inside.”

To manage the store, Chandler hired Levi Horsch, a longtime Fisher resident with more than 10 years experience managing meat and deli shops at County Market and other grocery stores.

“For him to bring the store back and take that big of a risk was really important to the Village of Fisher,” Horsch said. “He was confident when we opened, but he had a vision for the store and we have had success.”

The store was voted as the top grocery store in The News-Gazette’s People’s Choice Awards earlier this year.

Chandler says re-opening the grocery store and building a laundromat has been “fun,” but also something he is proud to do for his hometown.

“Fisher is such a great town and if you do anything for these people, they will support you,” he said. “They are close-knit and good people. That is the way it is across all of central Illinois. Everybody is out just to live a good life.”

Fisher Mayor Michael Bayler says Chandler deserves the Man of the Year honor.

“He has been instrumental in helping revitalize our downtown,” he said. “From purchasing and remodeling the grocery store, adding a laundromat, to also remodeling

another store that now houses our new Main Street Cookies and Cream. Without his vision and courage to take chances, I’m not sure what our downtown would look like. Brandon’s drive and passion for investing in his hometown is a great example for all young people. Our community is lucky to have Brandon and his family living in our great little town and we can’t wait to see what he is going to next.”

When not working, Chandler also volunteers his time to a variety of organizations including Boy Scouts Pack 172, the Lucky Foot Festival, and Fisher Youth Baseball and Fisher Youth Football.

“I wasn’t a big sports guy growing up,” he said. “Our family was into working and not so much with the afterschool activities. So when I was invited to be an assistant coach in baseball and football, I jumped at the opportunity to be involved with my boys in the sports.”

Chandler has more plans for Fisher.

“I would like to see some more development,” he said. “I would like to see an industrial park and more middle class jobs become available. Fisher has a lot to offer to Rantoul and Mahomet and we are right there between Bloomington and Champaign-Urbana and also near Mahomet, Gibson City and Rantoul.”

Horsch said that Fisher is a better place now, because of Chandler.

“Everything we have been successful with, he has invested back into the community,” he said. “He really has a vision for downtown and he has a vision to succeed. There have been new businesses come into downtown and I think people are excited about the community and I think that has a lot to do with Brandon and Carissa being willing to take the leap of faith. I think his vision and his willingness to invest in the town is really paying off.”

Chandler said he was honored with the “Forty Under 40” designation.

“It’s pretty neat because I think I am one of the few blue collar guys that made the list,” he said. “I have three night classes under my belt and that’s it. Everything else is union-taught or self-taught so to be an entrepreneur and have a couple of businesses working well in the community is pretty crazy.”

But he deflects the credit, as well.

“You can’t do it by yourself,” he said. “You need to do it as a team and that is the main thing I always live by. Let people do their job and reward them accordingly. At the end of the day, you are all in it together. ... Everybody needs to do it together and make good money and get the reward together.”



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ANTHONY BENJAMIN | 39

Founder and Managing Member, **Triptych Brewing Company**



Community involvement: I try to use the little bit of clout and success we've had at Triptych to benefit charitable causes whenever we can. This has led to lots of collaborations with local charities and organizations like the Champaign County Humane Society, the Japan House at the University of Illinois, DSC, and countless others.

Proudest professional accomplishment: The growth and scope of what Triptych has become over the last nine years. I remember my early business plans were hoping that we could sustain 20,000 pints of beer brewed and sold each year and now we easily brew more than twice that much each month at Triptych. When we first started, we didn't have a single employee and now we have 10 full-time team members.

Best decision you ever made? To attend college. I hadn't particularly enjoyed high school and I had no idea how to afford college but when I first began dating the woman who would later become my wife, her parents insisted that anyone who was serious about seeing their daughter would also take their education seriously. So I took a leap, and lots of loans, and got a Computer Science degree. That started a journey that eventually led me to starting my own business and though I rarely do any programming these days, the critical thinking and problem solving skills that I developed continue to serve me well to this day.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... To take a break. Not every email that comes in or situation that arises during the day requires or even benefits from immediate engagement. In fact, I find that intentionally pressing the pause button to get more data or to discuss with my team seems to lead to a better outcome.

From the nominator: "I believe he deserves the award due to his care and devotion to his employees which includes paying them above market and providing a living wage. He also has actively supported charities in the community and has brought an enjoyable and important craft beer industry to CU-Savoy" — **James Voigtlander**, *Voigtlander Management, Inc.*

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Congratulations on your outstanding achievements and leadership, Michael!



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KELLI BERTRAM | 27

Family and Intern Coordinator, **Crisis Nursery**

Proudest professional accomplishment: Starting a business during the pandemic. I launched two books at the start of the pandemic and they were a huge success. I created something that was in serious need, as people who never struggled with mental health before are now struggling, including myself.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... to live the life you want. In today's world we are so stuck on what society wants us to do, and the "norms," that we forget that we are actually in full control of our lives. If I die tomorrow, I know that every second I was on this earth I was doing what made me happy, and doing something that made a difference. That is the best way to live, in my opinion.

Best decision you ever made? To take six months off after I graduated from my MSW program. When I graduated I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. I traveled all over the world for the six months, by myself. I lived in the middle of a Thailand jungle taking care of elephants. I then went to Cambodia and taught English in a school. I worked at a summer camp for children with Autism, and then I went to California and nannied for a complete stranger.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Say yes to new opportunities. No matter how scary or unprepared you feel, just say yes when a new opportunity presents itself because you never know where it is going to take you.

From the nominator: "I believe Kelli deserves this award as recognition for the hard work and dedication she gives every day to the families in our communities and for the joy she brings to so many lives. She is hardworking, uplifting, and driven to make the world a little brighter each day. I'd just like to see that light shine on her for once." — **Wendy Bertram**, *University of Illinois*



JOSH BIRKEY | 37

Program Manager of Grants and Contracts, **Parkland College**



Community involvement: I was the head boys' soccer coach at Judah Christian High School for five years before stepping away this summer to spend more time with my young kids. Also, prior to the pandemic, I played music at church. Currently, my wife and I are in the process of starting a small urban farm that we hope will grow food to donate to surrounding neighborhoods.

Proudest professional accomplishment: At Parkland, it was helping secure the college's first ever solo grant award from the National Science Foundation. While coaching at Judah, it was helping lead the school to its first ever sectional final.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Almost all successes require some degree of failure. Don't be afraid of failing.

An important fact you may not know about me ... While an undergraduate student at UIUC I was the drummer for a number of bar bands that played in town and around the Midwest.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Keep your commitments.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Let the people who make your job better know how much you appreciate them.

My partner/best friend/mom would describe me as ... Overly energetic.

To relax I ... Play music, paint, and garden.

From the nominator: "Josh is fearless with big ideas, has insight on how to execute them, and he has a balance of humility and confidence and has an amazing ability to see strengths in others and helps bring out those strengths to build great teams." — **Todd Crowley**, *Prairie State Tractor*

MEGHAN BURKE | 38

Professor of Special Education, **University of Illinois**



Community involvement: I am on the boards of several agencies that serve our community including Family Matters and CU-ABLE. I also helped develop the Access Urbana-Champaign website (<http://accessucillinois.web.illinois.edu/home/>) which gauges the accessibility of restaurants in our community.

Proudest professional accomplishment: I am very fortunate that I get to work with the Early Intervention Clearinghouse (EIC), the statewide lending library for families of children with disabilities in Illinois. The EIC is located in our community (51 Gerty Drive in Champaign, eicclearinghouse.org). With COVID-19, the EIC was the only agency to provide iPads and WIFI hotspots on loan to families so they could access early intervention via telehealth. I am privileged to work with an incredible team at the EIC that stepped up to the plate to support families.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Work on things that matter.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I have two young children that I love to spend time with exploring nearby areas.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I hope to continue to be able to serve my community by supporting individuals with disabilities and their families.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Having supportive and thoughtful colleagues has been critical to my career. I am so grateful to work with dedicated and smart people at the University, in academia, and in the disability community.

From the nominator: "Dr. Meghan Burke is intelligent, kind, hardworking, friendly, approachable, and funny. As a leader in the Special Education field, she exemplifies the best qualities of an advocate, teacher, and mentor. She is forward-thinking, solution-focused, and has seemingly unlimited energy." — **Sarah Isaacs, University of Illinois**



Congratulations Jaclyn!

We are proud of your achievements and know that the agency and the community will continue to benefit from your commitment and leadership.

The Staff and Board of Commissioners of
Vermilion Housing Authority.



DAN BURKYBILE | 37

Director of Pharmacy Services, Kirby Medical Center

Community involvement: I've have been a Monticello boys' soccer coach since 2008. I served as an assistant coach from 2008-2012 before taking over as head coach in 2013. I also am a member of the Monticello Rotary Club and Monticello Christian Church. I recently gave a presentation on drug abuse awareness at the Monticello Middle School.

Proudest professional accomplishment: I have overseen credentialing of three pharmacies at Kirby Medical Center — licensing of an inpatient pharmacy, a new outpatient pharmacy within the hospital, and a buyout of a local outpatient pharmacy.

An important fact you may not know about me ... My faith in God allows me to take chances in life that others may not take and to be okay with doing things differently than the norm. My identity as a pharmacy director or a soccer coach isn't the end-all be-all. If I fail or stumble with those "hats" on, it's going to be alright.

Best decision you ever made? I was nervous to come to Kirby Medical Center knowing I would start by myself as a lone pharmacist. I had come from Carle Foundation Hospital working with 30 other pharmacists. However, Kirby has been a great fit for me and allowed me to blossom beyond just the pharmacy.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Get it done, no excuses. I'm determined and willing to do whatever it takes to succeed. This could be hours of reading, watching YouTube videos, and/or reaching out to old friends for help. My wife says it's great to be on my team with my determination, but not so great when you get in my way.

From the nominator: "Dan is a person of quiet influence. He is a positive role model for young professionals as well as students and student-athletes. He is extremely intelligent but is known just as much for his down-to-earth, humble demeanor. He has the unique quality of being a respected leader as well as embodying a teachable spirit." — **Jerry Dusenberry**, *Monticello Christian Church*



Congratulations on your exceptional achievements, Jenell Hardy!

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BOBBIE BUTLER | 30

Assistant Vice President, **Commercial Lending, Hickory Point Bank & Trust**



Community involvement: Through work I help the community by working with local businesses overcome financial obstacles with loan and treasury management services. I am involved with the Salvation Army's finance committee and board, the Women Build Committee with Habitat, and the Chamber of Commerce's finance committee. I love working with various organizations in Champaign County as each serve a different need.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... there are no stupid questions, so ask questions. This advice has saved me time and in turn increased my efficiency as my questions allow me to complete a task correctly the first time.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I see myself with a successful banking career and I would be living out in the country with my husband, dogs, and possibly kids.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Always keep your promise and follow through.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... It is okay if you make mistakes as long as you accept responsibility and take action by correcting the mistake and learning from it.

To relax I ... To relax I like to go on walks or runs with my dogs and husband. Or watching a true crime show or docuseries.

From the nominator: "Bobbie spent four years at the University of Illinois and was excited to return to the community in 2017. She quickly became involved with the Chamber of Commerce and Young Professionals events. That led to a role on the Chamber of Commerce Finance Committee and on the Habitat for Humanity Women's Build Committee. A co-worker introduced her to the Salvation Army and now she is a board member. Her caring attitude and financial analysis skills have led to her successful career as a Commercial Relationship Manager at Hickory Point Bank." — **Steven Tock, Hickory Point Bank & Trust**

DUSTIN CAMPBELL | 33

President, **Lazers Edge**

Community involvement: We host an annual blood drive with Impact Life, along with donating printers to local area Youth Clubs. We also sponsor a Senior Softball League.

I attribute my success to ... My family taught me about hard work and my grandfather shared many trade skills at a young age and I attribute that to my work ethic. My dedicated team at Lazars Edge and the support from the Central Illinois community is a huge part of my success as well.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... No matter what job you have, always do your best. Even if it feels like the hard work isn't paying off, it will in the long run.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I grew up locally in Champaign-Urbana and am proud to call this community my home.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? My passion, servicing customers, repairing, and selling printers and printing supplies.

Best decision you ever made? My best academic decision was the decision to change my major to Electronics. My best personal decision was my wife and two beautiful daughters.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Treat everyone with the same level of respect.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Communication is key. Without communication there is nowhere next to go.

My partner/best friend/mom would describe me as ... Dedicated, hard working, family man.

From the nominator: "He has integrity in all aspects of life — always willing to lend a hand, is kind, responsible and an all-around great guy. ... He deserves to have the spotlight shined on him for all his hard work and dedication to Lazars Edge and our local community." — **Mandy Wireman, FE Moran**



SAHIL CONTRACTOR | 26

Franchisee, Wingstop

Community involvement: I am involved with many social groups in Champaign including the NAACP and also doing my own events to give back to the people.

Proudest professional accomplishment: All the community events I am involved with give me a sense of personal accomplishment within myself, but out of them all, my proudest would be being honored with the “Unity in the community” award given to me by the NAACP. This award gave me a personal sense of how huge one person’s impact can be. I know I share this award with all the people, teachers, mentors, and believers in me! It takes a village to create a leader and success.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Don’t give UP. Always look UP.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I see myself in a position where I have not only grown as an individual, but also help grow my community to a level which it has not been at before. These are just words, but the action put behind these words is what is going to make the difference in my attributes.

Most important lesson I’ve learned in my professional career is ... That there will be hard times and good times. You have to expect both and try to learn from it all. You have to keep moving forward.

My partner/best friend/mom would describe me as ... A very caring, passionate, stubborn, and relentless individual who gets the job done and has no excuses in the process.

From the nominator: “He deserves this award because of his selfless generosity. He is an inspiration to young business owners/entrepreneurs. He has given back so much to the community, his employees, friends and family. He is always there for others and makes sure that everybody is taken care of and never hungry. He is making plans to help more people all over the world.” — **Nicole Giannini**, *friend and business associate*



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DERRICK COOPER | 36

Associate Principal, Champaign Central High School



Community involvement: I volunteer and support programs geared toward helping marginalized youth in our community. Community service activities through Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated; I also advocate for equitable and inclusive schools.

Proudest professional accomplishment: I was selected as the University of Illinois College of Education's Academic Programs Committee 2021-2022 Al S. Davis Leadership Award recipient and the 2021-2022 Dodds Memorial Fellowship recipient.

I attribute my success to ... my faith, a strong work ethic, tremendous resilience, and lots of family support.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Be the change you want to see.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Continuously dedicate yourself to improving your craft.

My partner/best friend/mom would describe me as ... My wife would describe me as hardworking, family-oriented, and reflective.

To relax I ... Lots of self-care and spending quality time with my two kids.

From the nominator: "What I admire about Derrick is his selflessness. He is always willing to lend a helping hand and oftentimes putting others' needs and wants before his own. He dedicates himself to being the best at what he does and encourages those around him to do the same. ... I get to see first-hand the sacrifices he has made throughout the years to be where he is today. Derrick is passionate about making a positive impact when it comes to education. He knows from experience how not having a good education foundation can negatively impact a student's desire to want to learn." — **Shaniece Cooper**, *University of Illinois Police Department*

Congratulations

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EMILY CORUM | 33

Assistant Vice President, Community Relations and Marketing Manager, **Busey Bank**

Proudest professional accomplishment: I get to be a part of some really impactful moments at work through donation drives, coordinated volunteer efforts and charitable donations. One of the most recent moments came when Busey associates and leaders joined the summer campers at the Boys and Girls Club for a day of service around the facility. Seeing the joy on the kids' faces in this instance and in so many others make for some incredible moments.

I attribute my success to ... Taking chances, working hard, having initiative and my friends, family and peers.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... It's only a mistake if you don't learn from it.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I'm a mom to an 8-year-old. It's his world, I'm just living in it ;)

Best decision you ever made? Making this community "home." Champaign County has been home for 15 years and it's been exciting to see the community evolve over just that short period of time and it's that progression that has really drawn out my passion for bettering our communities and led me to where I am today.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... How important it is to create a work-life balance.

My partner/best friend/mom would describe me as ... noble, hard-working, strong-willed, prepared, dependable, chipper and LOUD.

From the nominator: "Emily's innovation, compassion and drive continue to impact Busey associates as well as the communities and neighbors we serve. At all levels of Busey, Emily's leadership and encouragement of fellow associates does not go unnoticed. She is one of those rare individuals with the unique ability to effortlessly engage those around her."

— **Deanna Capel**, *Busey Bank*



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DAVID DANENHOWER | 37

Billing Analyst, **United Natural Foods Inc.**



Proudest professional accomplishment: My acceptance into the prestigious Marshall School of Business Food Industry Leadership master's degree program at the University of Southern California on a scholarship from the Western Association of Food Chains.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Live locally, think globally.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I am an amateur music producer and I enjoy collecting, remixing and looping old funk 45' records.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Professionally, I plan on being a pioneer in the implementation of blockchain and distributed ledger technology in the global food supply chain. Blockchain promises to boost the global economy 1.7 trillion by 2030 while building a more efficient and transparent supply chain free of labor and environmental exploitation. On a more personal level, I hope to be as loving, caring, and inspirational to my family as my father has been to my mother, sisters, and me.

Best decision you ever made? Getting involved in food distribution and logistics while working for a company that genuinely cares about the community.

To relax I ... Sit at the piano and play Chopin preludes or cuddle up with my rescued greyhound, Alex Noodles.

From the nominator: "David is passionate about community engagement. He is hard-working, creative, and good at coming up with solutions to complicated problems. He is an asset wherever he is. David is a hardworking guy who genuinely cares about the community. He is not a big talker but rather a man of action. He seriously never stops working and will always be the last to leave a volunteer event. He wants to give back and is passionate about eliminating food insecurity and providing safe, affordable housing. He truly walks the talk."
— Kim Gollings, *Habitat for Humanity of Champaign County*

BRYCE DUBSON | 36

Owner, **Dubson Heating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration, Inc.**

Proudest professional accomplishment: Taking the family business into the next generation and furthering the legacy of superior service, or #TheDubsonDifference, established more than four decades ago by my father, Rick Dubson.

Best advice I can give or have received is to work hard, play hard. Although owning your own business can be all-consuming, balancing and prioritizing work demands and life demands are so important for success. When you are balanced, you are happy and more productive both at the office and at home.

An important fact you may not know about me I am an Eagle Scout. Today, I'm excited to share the scouts with my 9-year-old son, Waylon.

What's your one unbreakable rule? The Golden Rule. Treat others — colleagues, customers and community members — as one wants to be treated.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... to lead by example and to never compromise your integrity.

To relax I spend time with my family — whether cheering on the Chicago Cubs, the Fighting Illini or the Monticello Sages, playing baseball and basketball in the backyard with my three children, going on camping trips — near and far — with our travel trailer, or smoking meat on my grill with a beer in hand, of course!

From the nominator: "Whether delegating tasks in the office to family members, troubleshooting furnace and air conditioning issues with colleagues and customers, or sharing knowledge with a recent high school graduate interested in the trades — Bryce is collaborative, and through his collaboration, he develops strong, lasting relationships with each member of his team. He understands the importance of collaboration for organizational and individual success." — Christa Dubson, *Dubson Heating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration, Inc.*



AUSTIN DUCEY | 34

Vice President and Co-Owner, **Duce Construction**; Co-Owner, **Sport Redi-Mix**

Community involvement: Crisis Nursery, Board of Directors and Treasurer; St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, Volunteer; St. Matthew Catholic Church, involved in various men's ministries; Champaign West T-Ball, coach and volunteer

Proudest professional accomplishment: Being involved with a family business that has worked on so many impactful projects in the Champaign-Urbana community.

I attribute my success to ... the family, friends, and employees that I have around me. It would not be possible without them. My father has been instrumental in teaching me business knowledge as well as the importance of giving back to our community.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Have a positive attitude, do things with integrity, and never stop learning.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I am the fourth generation of the Ducey family to work in the concrete industry in Champaign County.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Continuing to be involved with our family businesses and trying to make our Champaign-Urbana community a better place.

To relax I ... enjoy spending time with my wife and three children or sitting around a fire with good friends.

From the nominator: "Austin is everything you look for in a leader. He proactively communicates, shares ideas, engages in conversations, and asks questions. He leads by example and motivates those around him to do their best. ... During a challenging year, Austin was instrumental in pivoting fundraising events for Crisis Nursery. His can-do attitude energized staff and board to think of new ways to do things. He is always looking for ways to help and give back to the community!" — **Stephanie Record**, *Crisis Nursery*



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Forty Under 40 Congratulations Mary!

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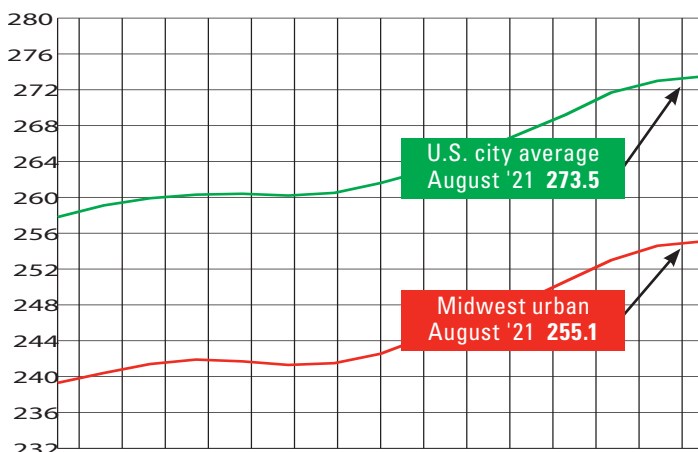
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Consumer price index

The CPI measures average price changes of goods and services over time, with a reference base of 100 in 1982-84. To put into context, a current CPI of 194.5 means a marketbasket of goods and services that cost \$100 in 1982-84 now costs \$194.50.

**Prices at the pump**

Average price per gallon of regular unleaded gas as of Sept. 29, 2021. Source: aaa.com

Area	Sept. '21	Sept. '20	Area	Sept. '21	Sept. '20
B-N	\$3.30	\$2.19	Decatur	\$3.29	\$2.23
C-U	\$3.28	\$2.22	Illinois	\$3.41	\$2.32
Danville	\$3.32	\$2.19	U.S.	\$3.19	\$2.18

Weekly grain prices

Prices for grain crops for the week of Sept. 27, 2021. Figures are for this week and the percentage change compared with a year ago.

C.I. = Central Illinois; (b) = per bushel; (t) = per ton; (100 wt.) = per hundredweight



Grain	Sept. 27, 2021	2020
C.I. Corn (b)	4.96 ▲	41.3%
C.I. Soybean (b)	12.45 ▲	28.2%
C.I. 48% Soybean Meal, Rail (t)	345.8 ▲	4.3%
Hard Red Winter Wheat (b)	7.45 ▲	54.7%
Truck to Kansas City		
Dark Northern Spring Wheat (b)	10.51 ▲	55.2%
14% MN, Rail		
Soft White Wheat Portland (b)	11.00 -	93.0%
Sorghum, Kansas City	9.58 ▲	31.5%
(100 wt.) Rail		

Source: USDA Livestock & Grain Market News

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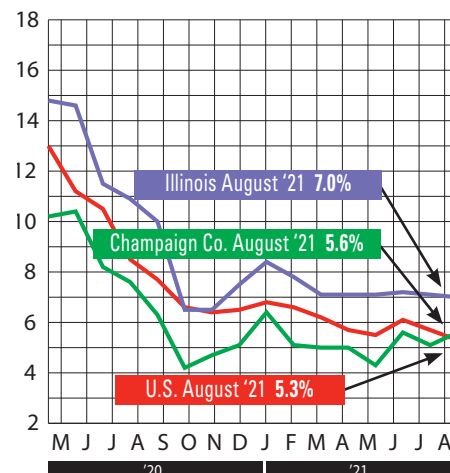


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Unemployment rates for Central Illinois counties, state and nation

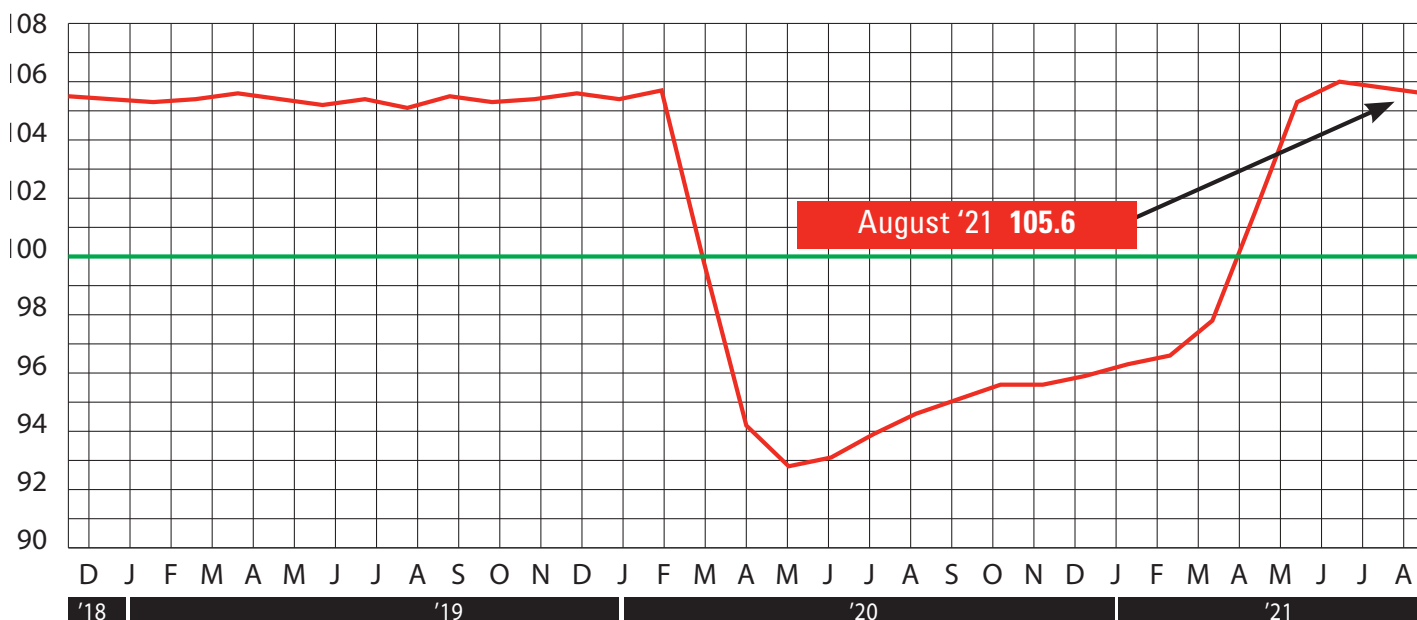
County	Labor force	Jobless	August '21	July '21	August '20	Change Month	Change Year
Champaign	104,645	5,914	5.7	5.2	7.2	▲ 0.5	▼ -1.5
Coles	21,983	1,261	5.7	5.7	8.3	0.0	▼ -2.6
Douglas	9,957	437	4.4	4.1	5.8	▲ 0.3	▼ -1.4
Edgar	8,643	394	4.6	4.4	6.0	▲ 0.2	▼ -1.4
Ford	6,098	312	5.1	4.6	6.3	▲ 0.5	▼ -1.2
Iroquois	13,502	654	4.8	4.3	5.8	▲ 0.5	▼ -1.0
Macon	47,362	3,871	8.2	7.5	10.6	▲ 0.7	▼ -2.4
McLean	82,870	4,351	5.3	4.9	6.9	▲ 0.4	▼ -1.6
Moultrie	7,453	283	3.8	3.5	5.3	▲ 0.3	▼ -1.5
Piatt	8,252	396	4.8	4.5	5.5	▲ 0.3	▼ -0.7
Vermilion	32,171	2,293	7.1	6.5	8.9	▲ 0.6	▼ -1.8
Region	342,936	20,166	5.4	5.0	7.0	▲ 0.4	▼ -1.6
State	6,155,621	434,308	6.8	7.0	11.0	▼ -0.2	▼ -4.2
U.S.	161,788,000	8,556,000	5.3	5.7	8.5	▼ -0.4	▼ -3.2

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, U.S. Department of Labor. Figures not seasonally adjusted.



University of Illinois flash index

What is the flash index? The flash index is an early indicator of the Illinois economy's expected performance. It is a weighted average of Illinois growth rates in corporate earnings, consumer spending and personal income. An index above 100 indicates expected economic growth; an index below 100 indicates the economy is contracting. Source: Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois



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Home sales Total units sold, including condominiums.

County							Median sales price		
	Sept '21	Sept '20	Change	YTD2021	YTD2020	Change	Sept '21	Sept '20	Change
Champaign	865	837	▲ 3.3%	2,212	2,027	▲ 9.1%	\$181,250	\$169,900	▲ 6.7%
Coles	156	186	▼ 16.1%	411	405	▲ 1.5%	\$110,450	\$99,000	▲ 11.6%
Douglas	50	55	▼ 9.1%	146	130	▲ 12.3%	\$130,000	\$116,250	▲ 11.8%
Edgar	53	42	▲ 26.2%	118	92	▲ 28.3%	\$82,000	\$77,000	▲ 6.5%
Ford	53	41	▲ 29.3%	139	122	▲ 13.9%	\$108,000	\$83,750	▲ 29.0%
Iroquois	113	83	▲ 34.9%	261	193	▲ 35.2%	\$110,500	\$108,000	▲ 2.3%
Macon	452	454	▼ 0.4%	1,195	1,107	▲ 7.9%	\$112,900	\$104,900	▲ 7.6%
McLean	839	888	▼ 5.5%	2,149	1,998	▲ 7.6%	\$184,900	\$168,950	▲ 9.4%
Moultrie	38	46	▼ 17.4%	81	108	▼ 25.0%	\$99,000	\$102,500	▼ 3.4%
Piatt	74	85	▼ 12.9%	209	198	▲ 5.6%	\$154,723	\$166,000	▼ 6.8%
Vermilion	219	210	▲ 4.3%	575	527	▲ 9.1%	\$90,000	\$79,900	▲ 12.6%
Illinois	55,003	56,292	▼ 2.3%	146,974	125,293	▲ 17.3%	\$255,000	\$224,000	▲ 13.8%

Source: Illinois Association of Realtors

Congratulations to the 2021 Forty Under 40 Recipients!



Anish Mehta
Vice President
Area Manager



Emily Corum
Assistant Vice President
Community Relations &
Marketing Manager

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Champaign County retail sales collections

	YTD Sept. 2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Change 2015-19
Champaign	\$3,738,980	\$17,255,397	\$17,088,725	\$16,520,654	\$16,365,053	\$16,161,108	▲ 6.8%
Mahomet	\$169,801	\$735,564	\$761,147	\$698,876	\$618,235	\$628,086	▲ 17.1%
Philo	\$29,245	\$105,128	\$111,841	\$89,842	\$86,370	\$77,899	▲ 35.0%
Rantoul	\$361,245	\$1,525,491	\$1,435,536	\$1,375,921	\$1,390,511	\$1,390,449	▲ 9.7%
Savoy	\$557,088	\$2,323,105	\$2,434,367	\$2,292,820	\$2,326,158	\$2,253,379	▲ 3.1%
St. Joseph	\$54,853	\$235,632	\$239,371	\$224,224	\$206,971	\$200,776	▲ 17.4%
Tolono	\$37,494	\$152,373	\$198,891	\$171,404	\$152,498	\$158,233	▼ 3.7%
Urbana	\$1,300,360	\$5,584,667	\$5,210,233	\$5,026,102	\$5,012,534	\$5,095,018	▲ 9.6%
Unincorporated	\$200,863	\$1,371,459	\$1,427,403	\$1,350,949	\$1,185,550	\$1,102,904	▲ 24.3%
County total	\$6,449,929	\$29,288,815	\$28,907,515	\$27,750,792	\$27,343,880	\$27,067,851	▲ 8.2%

Source: Latest statistics available from Illinois Department of Revenue

Congratulations to all Forty Under 40 Winners!



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Hotel/motel statistics

Total amount of revenue generated in Champaign and Urbana by hotels and motels for room rentals only.

TOTAL REVENUE			
August '21	July '21		Change
\$377,422	\$333,632	▲	13.13%
ANNUAL TOTALS			
2020	2019		Change
\$2,214,585	\$85,804,972	▼	-97.42%

Source: Cities of Champaign and Urbana



Amtrak total monthly riders

	August 2021	September 2021
Bloomington-Normal	12,918	12,931
Champaign-Urbana	13,778	17,422
Mattoon	1,714	2,022
Rantoul	375	337



Primary Mortgage Market Survey

Freddie Mac surveys lenders each week on the rates, fees and points for the most popular mortgage products. The following are the average rates for the week of Sept. 30, 2021, for the U.S. and for the North Central region, which includes Illinois, and the average rates for the U.S. one year ago.

Mortgage Type	U.S. Sept. '21	U.S. Sept. '20
30-year fixed	3.01%	2.88%
15-year fixed	2.28%	2.36%
5/1-year adjustable	2.48%	2.90%

Source: Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp.

Willard Airport passenger totals

YEAR-TO-DATE TOTALS			
Sept '21	Sept '20		Change
37,594	28,114	▲	33.7%
ANNUAL TOTALS			
2020	2019		Change
35,874	105,559	▼	66.0%

Source: Willard Airport

LAINIEY EMMONS | 32

Chief Operating Officer, Elliott Counseling Group



Community involvement: I am actively involved in my neighborhood and actively serving as President of our HOA. I strive to help cultivate an inclusive community valuing diversity, stewardship of the environment, and relationships with our neighbors. I am also involved with the Unaccompanied Immigrant youth in C-U, a licensed foster parent, help coordinate litter cleanups, and other community events. I am also passionate about pet rescue and rehabilitation and have helped many animals live happy, healthy lives with their forever families.

I attribute my success to ... My excellent support system. I have amazing friends and neighbors who help me whenever I need it and help refuel my soul.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... find the person furthest from the center of the circle and focus on them feeling included and well cared for.

Best decision you ever made? Trusting my instincts. While staying home with my infant sons, I worked with friends to help found an animal rescue. That work led me to the next career opportunity, which led me to my current dream job that I always hoped for in an industry I am passionate about.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... To trust my gut and think things through.

To relax I ... Sit on the front porch with my neighbor and husband or curl up on the couch with my kids, husband, and dogs and watch some TV.

From the nominator: "Lainiey is the hardest working mother I know. She is always cultivating new ways to help her community and improve her businesses. There isn't a day that goes by that she isn't sharing ideas on what new project or idea she has or is working toward. She is the neighbor and friend that we all want, always available, always willing to lend a hand and always offering a listening ear." — **Stephanie Thompson, Talbots**

RACHEL FENNER | 30

Fitness Instructor/Co-Owner, Sculpt Fitness Gym

Proudest professional accomplishment: The first one that comes to mind is my involvement with the creating and implementation of training that myself and two other Soldiers provided to over 50 female Afghan Police Officers for the 2019 Afghanistan Elections. These women would be responsible for searching the clothing and body cavities of voters for weapons, suicide vests, etc. Female police officers are not allowed to possess items that could aid in their self-defense, regardless of the endangerment they would face in their role. The quality of training we put forward, encompassing search and seize procedures and self-defense maneuvers, was fundamental and critical to their safety and that of the citizens of Afghanistan who braved the extremist groups, such as the Taliban and ISIS, to cast a vote. I write this relieved and thankful that the women I trained safely and successfully executed their mission!

Best advice I can give or have received is ... "Anytime you stop striving to get better, you're bound to get worse. There's no such thing in life as simply holding on to what you've got."

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I look forward to balancing the endeavors of owning/operating a full-functioning gym, leading and developing a team of fitness enthusiasts, being passionately involved in a strong marriage, and chaperoning Grade School field trips. I'm very much anticipating adding Published Author and Mother to the unwritten list of titles of mine!

What's your one unbreakable rule? To be my authentic self and follow my inner compass, no matter the opposition of others.

To relax I ... Would you believe me if I told you that I exercise to relax?

From the nominator: "Rachel has overcome many difficulties and obstacles in her life, yet she knows no limits. The resiliency she has shown, in the wake of humble beginnings and the challenges she has faced, would have kept many from pursuing their dreams. Yet she has allowed nothing to deter her. Her business, the success it has found, and the effect it has on so many people, is literally a dream come true for her." — **Story Fenner, 112 Wine & Coffee**



SETH FLOYD | 36

Circuit Clerk, Piatt County

Community involvement: Post Commander of Piatt County VFW Post 5346, President-Elect of Monticello Rotary Club, President of the Piatt County Veterans Assistance Commission, and Member of Hamm-Burke American Legion Post 101, in addition to volunteering on various other local committees/boards/commissions.

Proudest professional accomplishment: Hands down, being a Dad to my three daughters. All three of them are the highlights of my days, everyday, even when those days would appear to be best suited for a reality television show.

I attribute my success to ... having the right people in my life. From my wife, mom, and siblings to everyone I work with professionally and serve with throughout the community; it is very rare that any of my perceived successes are solo achievements.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... you will solve so many more problems with your ears than you ever will with your mouth.

Best decision you ever made? The best decision I ever made was to join the army. Besides the training and benefits it has offered me, the personal interactions and perspectives it has given me are priceless and have absolutely made a profound difference in my views and my life.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Don't lie.

To relax I ... Journal, read nonfiction, ride my bicycle, and spend time with my family.

From the nominator: "Seth is an excellent example in his workplace and our community as to the positive difference one person can make when they are serving those around them. His maturity and commitment to hard work, fiscal and personal responsibility as well as pristine attention to detail make him an example of good citizenship for people of all ages."

— Bill Blickhan, First State Bank, Monticello



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MOLLY GOLDSTEIN | 39

Teaching Assistant Professor, **University of Illinois**



Proudest professional accomplishment: My nomination to the Grainger Engineering COVID-19 Wall of Recognition in Engineering for Teaching was a highlight for me in the middle of a very challenging year (for everyone). I worked hard to adapt my large class to be impactful for my students, and was so satisfied to see their learning gains throughout the year.

I attribute my success to ... having a clear idea on what my professional goals are and what my personal goals are. When you have a lot of opportunities, you have to have a lot of clarity on what really matters to you.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... My Grandma Molly used to say “You learn a lot more from listening than talking” and I find myself understanding that phrase more every year.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I love music and my siblings’ band, The Hathaways, was one of my favorites in the C-U music scene.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I’m currently in my dream job, so I hope to still be at U of I teaching and researching engineering design in 10 years.

Best decision you ever made? The best decision I ever made was attending an engineering summer camp at the University of Illinois when I was in high school. I found a career and college that I love — and I met my husband!

Most important lesson I’ve learned is ... to be comfortable with being adaptable.

To relax I ... love to take long walks with my family.

From the nominator: “Molly is one of the best educators I have had the pleasure of working with. She is passionate about the subject she teaches and is always looking for creative ways to engage students of all ages. ... She gives so much care, attention, time, and energy through education to empower those she works with.” — **Heidi Craddock**, *University of Illinois*

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RACHAEL GRAHAM | 29

Director of Development and Communications, Crisis Nursery

Community involvement: Outside of my work at Crisis Nursery, I coach girls' basketball at St. Joseph-Ogden High School. This past summer, I started volunteering with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Basketball Day Camp. I am a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and support several local organizations throughout the year.

I attribute my success to ... having people in my life who love, challenge, encourage, and support me.

An important fact you may not know about me ... My family started an online clothing boutique, Embolden, during the pandemic. It's something my sisters and I have always wanted to do.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Happily married with a family and career that I am passionate about.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Love God, Love Your Neighbor.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... "Why" is more important than "how." If you're clear on your why, you can figure out how. Stay true to your morals.

To relax I ... Watch sports, go shopping, read a good book or do a puzzle.

From the nominator: "Rachael leads by example with her strong work ethic and professionalism, sets stretch goals and then strategizes to meet or exceed those goals through thoughtful planning and communication. She understands the strategic plan and long-term vision for the Nursery and the impact her role has on maintaining our staffing and increasing the minimum wage. What I admire most about Rachael is her humble, unassuming personality. She doesn't seek recognition for the work that she does and allows her team to shine as a whole, even though she is largely responsible for their overall success." — **Stephanie Record**, Crisis Nursery



Congratulations Liz on this exceptional achievement!



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WES HANNER | 35

Co-Owner, **Kona Ice of Champaign**; Real Estate Broker, **Keller Williams Realty**



Community involvement: My biggest involvement with the community is through Kona Ice. We are honored to raise funds for local schools, PTA groups, churches, sports leagues, and many other organizations. Since we started Kona Ice of Champaign in 2014, we've been able to give back almost \$75,000 to our community.

Proudest professional accomplishment: My proudest professional accomplishments have been raising funds for the schools I attended as a kid. It has been really cool to be able to give back to Carrie Busey Elementary School, Franklin Middle School, and Centennial High School. Also, I am honored to help both buyers and sellers navigate the real estate market. It is my privilege and I take it as a great responsibility to do what is best for my client.

I attribute my success to ... my family and especially my wife, Andrea. She's had my back no matter what. When I wanted to get my real estate license and even when I told her I wanted to own and operate a shaved ice truck.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I've had two honorable mentions for songwriting in American Songwriter magazine.

Best decision you ever made: To bring Kona Ice to the Champaign-Urbana area. Being able to give back to the community I grew up in has been amazing.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... that a "no" doesn't always mean no forever. Believe in yourself and your product and keep trying.

To relax I ... play golf, play guitar, and enjoy time with my 15-month-old daughter, Haven.

From the nominator: "He's always there for his family and friends. He's driven to take care of the people around him and he wants to better the community he grew up in. He's compassionate, empathetic and an amazing communicator." — **Andrea Hanner**, *Champaign Jewelers*

Congratulations Jaclyn!

A true community leader.
We are proud of you and
ever so happy to have
you on the BOV team!
- Board of Directors and Steering Committee
Balloons Over Vermilion NFP

JENELL HARDY | 39

Assistant Director of Business Services for the School of Art & Design, **University of Illinois**

Proudest professional accomplishment: One of my proudest professional accomplishments is the work that I did with the Emergency Shelter for Families Steering team. Through the steering teams' herculean efforts in 2013, we developed a pilot program that provided emergency housing to families with children which provided shelter for them together, in times of crisis. The shelter became a permanent program in 2016 and it continues today.

I attribute my success to ... my parents and especially my father. He worked extremely hard through his education and career to ensure that I would have access to opportunities many people only dream of. He was the wind beneath my wings.

Best advice I can give is ... a quote that I live by: If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair. — Shirley Chisholm.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Mentoring others and supporting their advocacy efforts for the greatest issues that affect the most vulnerable populations in our community.

Best decision you ever made? Deciding to become a mother.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Not to go to bed angry.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... to not fault someone for what they do not know. Often, they do not know what they do not know.

To relax I ... like to read a suspenseful novel, and travel when I can to enjoy time on the beach and listen to the ocean.

From the nominator: "Jenell is committed to her community, determined to leave her legacy, adaptable to different situations, generous to friends and family, practical in her decision-making, resourceful because of her various experiences, and always witty!" — **Gianina Baker**, *University of Illinois*



RANYA HASAN | 31

Assistant Dean of Students, **University of Illinois**; Mental Health Team, **Champaign County Sheriff's Office**



Proudest professional accomplishment: Being elected to the Board of Directors for the Crisis Residential Association to serve nationwide and globally to identify and cultivate response to systemic crisis service situations.

I attribute my success to ... the values and principals of my Palestinian roots that promote a culture of kindness, generosity, quest for knowledge, and resilience to aid social justice efforts.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... life is about balance and your slice of life is flavored based on the seasoning you empower yourself to choose for your personal menu.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I believe that chance favors the prepared, but my life goal is to work daily to correct the systemic equity issues that affect the ability of those who do not have the same chance to obtain this preparation.

Best decision you ever made? Choosing to work in the behavioral health profession where I can make a difference in someone's life every single day ... there is no better choice than the choice to help others.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Always stand up for what is right, extend your helping hand, and do not let your left hand know what charity your right hand gave to.

To relax I ... Practice making my mom's Palestinian dishes and reading on flights before landing to explore and volunteer in different locations around the world.

From the nominator: "She is passionate about social justice and work to advocate for equity-based care. Ranya empowers people and reminds them of their strengths and hopes. For the last 12 years she has been a staple of dependability and consistency in providing the best mental health services to anyone in need in Champaign County and the surrounding counties. Ranya is always willing to volunteer her time especially to further educate people about the importance of mental health care." — **Benita Gay**, *Rosecrance*

AMARIAH HAYS | 37

Advocate Coordinator, Champaign County CASA



Community involvement: I work directly with foster children in our community on a daily basis. I am on the Board of Directors at The Family Room, which provides basic necessities for our youth in care on a moment's notice in the form of care packages. I also volunteer my time coaching Jr. High Cheerleading.

Proudest professional accomplishment: In 2019 I co-created, co-wrote and launched a book with New York Times best-selling author Jaleigh Johnson, "A Place To Call Home." It is a children's book inspired by my foster care experience, written for children in foster care to help ease their fears of the unknown while navigating the DCFS system.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I'm a pretty handy gal! Just give me a good "how to" and a toolbox and I can fix just about anything.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I see myself loving my family and contributing to the community that raised me in a greater capacity.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... I was raised out of the foster care system right here in Champaign County. After college I came right back here to serve children in the community that I came from. Having been on both sides of DCFS, I can say there is one solid truth when working in the foster care system. The "System" is only as good as the person/person's maneuvering it for you and with you. Apathy has no place here.

From the nominator: "Amariah has spent her entire life working for foster children in Champaign County, the same community she grew up in where she was a foster child herself. She goes above and beyond for our most vulnerable children who deserve a voice. She believes you are not what you are born into, and our youth need to hear that every day and understand they have supporters in their corner. Everything she does professionally and in the community sets this example for our children in need." — **Emily Vayr**, Champaign County CASA

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JESSICA HOGUE | 39

Financial Advisor, **Northwestern Mutual**

Proudest professional accomplishment: I am proud to have been recognized as a Top Ten advisor and the leading female advisor in my category for the Northwestern Mutual Central Region in 2020.

I attribute my success to ... having a WHY. The WHY is the most important part and the driving force for the HOW and the WHAT — for me, it's to “BE THAT MOM ... and wife, sister, daughter, friend, colleague, family member.” If you want to know the HOW, it's because of the support of an amazing family that allows me to do this job and run my business the way I dreamed of. And, the WHAT is hard work, determination, persistence, urgency, great mentorship/coaching and the desire to be a resource to good people.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Just Keep Moving.

Best decision you ever made? Betting on myself two years ago when I opened my financial planning practice.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Never go to bed angry — my husband is my #1, and I never want to go to bed without him knowing it.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... to ask good questions and actively listen to what my clients and prospective clients are telling me.

To relax I ... take a vacation! Just ask anyone who knows me, the best way for me to unplug is in the sun and sand (well, more likely at the pool) with a cold drink in my hand.

From the nominator: “Jessica is the hardest worker in the room. She cares about people and wants to make sure her work is impacting those around her. She puts her all into everything she does. She has a servant heart and leads by serving others. ... She works hard building her business yet still marks time to make our community a better place to live.” — **Carrie Eisenmenger**, *Northwestern Mutual*



EMILY JENKINS | 39

Water Resources Project Engineer, **Farnsworth Group, Inc.**



Proudest professional accomplishment: One of my proudest professional moments was watching children playing in one of the streams I had restored in town. There is a stream structure that makes a perfect little boulder path across the water and a couple kids were jumping from rock to rock, poking and peering into the water, laughing and talking. It makes me so happy to see people enjoying a project I've worked on.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... to get outside. Spend time around trees, streams, nature. It helps lower stress, puts life into perspective, and gives you a chance to observe the world around you.

Best decision you ever made? One of my best decisions was to insist upon working part-time at Farnsworth Group. It gives me the balance I need in my life to spend time with my family, to engage in community activities, and to keep me motivated at work.

To relax I ... Camp! My Dad started sharing his love of camping and the wonder of nature with me and my sisters when we were very young. Camping — being surrounded by nature — has always been a place for me to recharge, to unwind, to put everything into perspective, to appreciate the complexities of Earth, to renew my passion to protect the environment, and to reinforce the reasons why I incorporate ecology into my stormwater engineering designs.

From the nominator: “There are very few female STEM leaders that can balance a challenging technical career, young family and community. She is someone that is deeply passionate about all aspects of her life. Emily invests her time in people and supports organizations that work to improve the lives of children and the environment. ... Emily truly works hard to ensure that the next generation will have more opportunities and a better environment than what she had inherited.” — **Ann Peedikayil**, *Caterpillar*

MIKE KRISMAN | 36

Financial Advisor, **Northwestern Mutual**



Community involvement: I recently got involved with CU 1-to-1 Mentoring. I will be mentoring a student at Stratton Elementary starting this fall. My student will be a second grader, and I will follow them through high school. Through my firm, I have been involved in Alex's Lemonade Stand to help fight Childhood Cancer. I also have participated in the Tom Jones Challenger League and look forward to participating again this year.

Proudest professional accomplishment: Upon starting my career in financial planning 13 years ago, I had zero clients. Since then I've been able to build my practice serving over 500 households, and now have a team of three. I love the sense of purpose I have and being a strong support system to my clients throughout their journey to and through retirement.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Have relentless solution focus. Don't focus on the negatives or problems and only focus on solutions and what you can control.

An important fact you may not know about me ... Some say my morning routine is a little crazy, but it helps me get my mind and body ready for the day. I'm at the gym by 4:30 a.m. 5-6 days a week.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Don't make excuses.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... To listen and be "other focused." It's not about me, it's about my clients and their goals and what they are trying to achieve for themselves and their families.

From the nominator: "Mike is an exceptional person, he's always looking for ways to help people. ... He'll help anyone at anytime, a true friend and one I admire. ... If there is anyone behind the scenes in this community who does the right thing no matter the situation and doesn't expect the credit for it, it's Mike." — **Ben Quinn, Koerner Distribution**

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J LEMAN | 36

Realtor, eXp Realty; Football Analyst, Big Ten Network

Community involvement: Active with The Vineyard Church of Central Illinois, Board Member Salvation Army, Coach and Sponsor of Stephens YMCA Sports programs. Supporter of C-U at Home, FCA, Habitat for Humanity

Proudest professional accomplishment: Not being afraid to start something new and betting on myself. I am still trying to figure out what I want to do when I grow up.

I attribute my success to ... my Faith in Jesus Christ, my parents, coaches, and my wife. Nobody is a "stand alone success" and we all eat off trees we didn't plant.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Humble yourself. Nothing will elevate you faster than walking in true humility.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I had a speech impediment until about fourth grade. Between sales calls, working on TV and radio shows, and public speaking I talk a lot now and I consider my ability to speak a strength.

Best decision you ever made? Marrying my wife Katy Leman. She is very different than me in a good way and has taught me so much.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Treat others how you want to be treated.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... When you are trying to sell something, calling people older and more successful is always scary. Do it anyway.

To relax I ... Play with my kids, read, go camping, go to the beach, watch college football.

From the nominator: "J is hungry, humble, smart. He wants to make the world a better place and works hard to help people get where they want to be." — **Julie Yoder**, *The Vineyard Church*



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DANA MARTIN | 36

Fifth-grade teacher, Lincoln Trail Elementary School



Community involvement: My role as a teacher has provided me with the opportunity to start and lead Youth Leadership Club, a club for fifth-grade students to learn and practice leadership skills, to give back to the community, and to experience the blessing of service over self. This will also be the fourth year for 5G Packs Joy, a project inspired by the passing of a dear student and friend, Joel Roberts, that led my students to collect, donate, and deliver food, toiletries, and gifts to 35 families, including about 75 children, each holiday season, in his honor.

Proudest professional accomplishment: Watching my students grow, particularly in their confidence, compassion, and kindness toward others, is by far the most rewarding aspect of my job.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I'm very organized, except with emails. I'm an email hoarder.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I've spent my entire career (15 years) in the same fifth-grade classroom, and in 10 years I plan to be in the same room, loving another group of fifth-grade students. I can't imagine myself anywhere else. It's right where I belong.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... At the end of the day, academics are important, experiences are great, but relationships mean the most. Students will never forget how you made them feel.

From the nominator: "She is truly a unique woman. She sees a need and takes action. She doesn't necessarily expect anyone to help her. She would do all of this on her own even without help from others because she cares so much about her students and their families. She spends hundreds of hours per year outside of her full-time job trying to make the world a better place one student at a time." — Sarah Young, *Christie Clinic*

ANISH MEHTA | 30

Vice President, Retail Area Manager, Busey Bank

Proudest professional accomplishment: This past year has been difficult for many with COVID-19 impacting many small businesses more than most. I was thrilled to be a part of an organization that made funds from the SBA's Payroll Protection Program available to many of the struggling small business owners who needed help to keep their doors open and their employees paid! As an Area Manager, I got to be one of the many faces in the company that was able to help these businesses through the application process so that they could get the assistance they desperately needed.

I attribute my success to ... the support I get from my coworkers, friends, family and of course my husband who has always been there giving me the confidence to put in my best everyday. Without all of these people, I wouldn't be where I am today.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... There's nothing like the confidence you gain from pushing past your comfort zone and doing something that used to make you nervous or scared. (I try to apply this to many situations in my life which has been a great confidence builder for me.)

An important fact you may not know about me ... I have worked or have played a part in some form of customer service since I was 8 years old. My family owned and operated a business for over 13 years.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Keep your word. If you commit to something, then you should always do it. Promise less, but deliver more.

From the nominator: "Anish's leadership style is one to emulate. He has an innate ability to harness top talent, along with a single driving factor to his success — dedication. ... Anish continues to have a positive and lasting impact, making a positive and lasting difference not only within Busey but within the community." — Mark Wisniewski, *Busey Bank*



BRIDGET SCHOTT | 35

Assistant Attorney General, Illinois Attorney General's Office

Proudest professional accomplishment: When I was a prosecutor at the Champaign County State's Attorney's Office, my trial partner and I successfully prosecuted a Predatory Criminal Sexual Abuse of a Child case and sent the perpetrator to prison for 40+ years.

I attribute my success to ... my parents. They instilled the ideas of hard work and dedication in me very early in life. They were also very active in supporting the community, and through their actions taught me the importance of service and giving back to the community.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... "you get further with honey than vinegar." You can get to the same result, and often a better one, if you don't burn bridges with other people in the process.

An important fact you may not know about me ... from the ages of 12 to 22, I worked every summer detassling corn for a detassling crew with Pioneer. I even drove the large tractors or "people movers" with 12 other detasslers on board. This job, more than any other job I have had, taught me the value of hard work and tenacity.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Never be afraid to stand up for yourself and speak your opinion (respectfully, of course). This was a long lesson for me to learn, and it took me almost 10 years to really embrace. In some typically male professions, women can be treated in a very frustrating manner,

To relax I ... To relax, I like to golf, walk my dogs while listening to audio books, garden, or binge-watch trashy reality TV shows.

From the nominator: "Bridget deserves to be recognized as a woman who leads a life that is exemplary. She is highly educated, effective in her work, mentors young women, and truly cares about the community. If every individual did half of what Bridget has accomplished we would see a huge positive impact in every aspect of life." — **Marguerite Bailey**, *Wolfram Research, Inc.*



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KRYSTLE SHELTON | 36

Owner, Chief Operations Officer, **Autumn Freight, Inc.**; Assistant Manager, **White House Black Market**



Community involvement: Since moving to Champaign I've been able to build meaningful relationships and get to know the community through serving at Windsor Road Christian Church, volunteering with Junior League of Champaign Urbana and now supporting the mission as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Proudest professional accomplishment: Professionally, I'm most proud of the courage to pursue entrepreneurship. As a business owner alongside my husband, I am able to utilize my passion to educate and skills to strategically execute our vision while also provide an encouraging and motivating work environment for employees.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... It's not what you know but what you're willing to learn. And when the opportunity presents itself trust that you are your own #goals.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Wow! In 10 years by God's grace I will be flourishing as a wife, a nurturing mother to our children, thriving businesswoman and advocate for professionals of color and cheering my friends and family in their endeavors!

Best decision you ever made? Swiping right on Tinder — meeting my husband :)

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Go where you're appreciated, poured into and sparks joy!! I am not defined by titles and there's freedom in pursuing your purpose and don't let the fears of others put limitations on you.

To relax I ... Go to the movies and eat popcorn!

From the nominator: "Our community has so many commendable people who are proud to serve, and Krystle is one of those who does it effortlessly and gracefully. Her heart is pure. Her work ethic is impeccable. And she genuinely merits an opportunity to be in the spotlight for this amazing recognition of awesomeness." — **Denise Poindexter, Stratum Med**



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BRITTANY SIMON | 34

Public Relations Manager, Carle Health

Community involvement: I support the Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club as a member of their Resource Committee; volunteer at the Stonecreek Church food pantry as often as possible; and sit on the United Way Women United Advisory Committee.

Proudest professional accomplishment: Being a part of the 2015 Feeding America Hunger Action Month campaign refresh that brought forward a bold new approach to bringing awareness to the issue of hunger in America. I helped our network of food banks find creative solutions to speak about the issue and the nation learn more about the millions of families who aren't sure where they will find their next meal.

I attribute my success to ... being taught the value of hard work and doing something to the best of your ability by my parents and the support I receive everyday from my husband. I am also lucky enough to do something that I believe helps make our community a better and more healthy place, which is a motivating factor in everything I try to do.

Best decision you ever made? To follow my gut and not pursue a career in broadcast journalism. I took the skills I learned as a journalist and applied them to a career in communications to help tell stories in a different way. This choice sent me down a trajectory that looks very different than what it might have been but one I couldn't be happier to be in.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Mistakes will happen and it's impossible to do everything right every time, but owning up to them will build character and learning from them will move you forward.

From the nominator: "I have looked up to Brittany since I met her. Besides being a genuinely kind person, Brittany is someone who always sees the glass half full. When presented with a task, Brittany uses creative thinking and experience while going the extra mile to ensure the best possible result. She makes a positive impact on all who she comes into contact with." — **Renae Cory**, *Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club*



MARY NOEL STEFAN | 32

Director of Marketing and Communications, United Way of Champaign County



Proudest professional accomplishment: It was incredibly rewarding to be part of the team for the Champaign County COVID-19 Relief Fund. During the early days of the pandemic, we were able to raise funds to ensure our community members had food, housing, technology and more to stay safe, secure and healthy.

I attribute my success to ... A team of incredible colleagues who share honest feedback and proofread everything!

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Tony Clements, a longtime United Way board member, was a kind and gracious mentor. He told me to never be afraid to ask clarifying questions. Clear communication of expectations is critical to collaboration.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I am a fifth-generation "townie." My husband and I played on the same Champaign Park District youth soccer team as kids for five years!

Best decision you ever made? Moving back to Champaign after college. It was tough to leave behind friends I had made in Nashville, but I knew I wanted to be closer to my family. Without this decision, I would not be working at United Way or have reconnected with my now-husband.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... to solve a miscommunication, pick up the phone. I've found that one phone call can often solve something much quicker than 10 emails back-and-forth.

To relax I ... Take a long walk around my neighborhood or work in my garden while listening to podcasts. A few favorites are Inside Illini Basketball, The Daily, and Illini Inquirer.

From the nominator: "Mary is everything we could ask of a community member. She is a concerned and engaged advocate for our neighbors who struggle; and has chosen a profession which allows her to marry her professional skills and passion for serving our community." — **Rebecca Guyette**, *United Way of Champaign County*

ALEXANDRIA STEWART | 30

Owner, **Confidentially Yours**



Proudest professional accomplishment: Becoming 100% owner of Confidentially Yours.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Never give up. It took me eight years to finally become the owner of CY. I stuck to my gut and I worked really hard until it was possible. Make a list of goals and crush them. Your dreams don't work unless you do!

An important fact you may not know about me ... I've only had one other job which was at Polo Ralph Lauren Factory Store in Tuscola.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? I see myself owning multiple store locations around the U.S. Along with owning a large building in the C-U community to give women more options and to build our growing ecommerce site.

Best decision you ever made? To become a certified mastectomy fitter. This has allowed me to help so many women in central Illinois. I have met so many incredibly brave and courageous women. They are truly inspiring!

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Always put your family before your work.

My partner/best friend/mom would describe me as ... Passionate, caring, and a leader

To relax I ... binge watch Grey's Anatomy

From the nominator: "Alex is a strong leader, making decisions that are not just good for the business but also for her customers and her employees. She is honest with her employees, and operates the business with such integrity. She is enthusiastic, confident, and inspiring as she works towards building the future of her store. She makes genuine connections with her employees, customers, and the other businesses and organizations she works with." — **Natalie Kenny Marquez**, *Grow Marketing + Communications, LLC*

ELIZABETH SULLARD | 29

Client Care Manager, **Synergy HomeCare**

Community involvement: I am the Chair for the Alzheimer's Association's Walk to End Alzheimer's and I just finished my 2.5-year board term as the Vice President and Social Chair of the Young Professionals of Champaign Urbana. I also currently serve on our local Senior Task Force Committee, Senior Isolation Committee, and the Committee on Aging.

I attribute my success to ... I attribute my success to two things. My commitment to helping others and surrounding myself with other good, successful people.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... life is all about the choices you make. It sounds much simpler than it is, trust me. Nothing was ever handed to me but I worked hard and chose time and time again things that I knew would lead me to success.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? No matter the age I always see myself doing two things. Helping people and being the best Mom I can be. I hope to continue to climb the health care world management ladder and help in bigger and bigger ways.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Skills can be taught but things like compassion and being a hard worker most likely can not. It's worth it to go with your gut and take the extra time to train that person who may not have the work history but has the attitude, kindness, and work ethic. When that person is trained and treats your client/customer with those same traits you do is so worth it.

From the nominator: "Liz exemplifies service in every way personally and professionally. Her chosen career of nursing and healthcare is all about helping and serving others. She loves meeting her patients and goes above and beyond not only making sure they have the home care services they need but also connecting them to any other resources they need to ensure they are fully taken care of in every way. If serving others full time wasn't enough she is also volunteering constantly." — **Brittani Matthews**, *Synergy HomeCare*



BRANDON TAYLOR | 39

Insurance Agent, **Country Financial**; Owner, **3Ravens Food & Spirits**; First Sergeant, **Illinois Army National Guard**

Community involvement: I have been a volunteer assistant wrestling coach at Monticello Middle School for several years. I've also offered my services to the Monticello and Campaign Kids Wrestling Clubs by helping them run their wrestling tournaments too. I spent three years as a volunteer for Monticello Main Street. I am also a member of the Monticello Athletic Boosters.

Proudest professional accomplishment: I've spent most of my professional career mentoring and developing young leaders. There's no better feeling than when you get to watch those leaders come into their own, growing personally and professionally.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... to keep moving forward. There is a lot of noise out there and plenty of folks who will try to deter you from your passion/goals (sometimes intentional, sometimes unintentional). Block out that negative energy and push on.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? Continuing to make a positive impact in the lives of others. I do have lofty expectations as a business professional, but I prefer to let my efforts and work ethic do the talking when it comes to future operations.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Take care of yourself. If you're not of sound mind and body, you can't perform at an optimal level!

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Be open minded and listen to your team (aka subordinates, peers, and higher level leadership alike). Take all things into consideration and make the best decisions you can for the team (not just an individual).

From the nominator: "Brandon's service, sacrifice and leadership to the country and community has had impacts on countless members of the Military and the community. He is constantly sought after for leadership advice and mentorship from youth in the community, entrepreneurs looking to get a start and peers in his business." — **Buddy Wilson, U.S. Army**



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JACLYN VINSON | 32

Executive Director, Vermilion Housing Authority



Community involvement: Danville Area Community College Foundation Board Member, Danville Public Library Foundation Board Member, Vermilion Healthcare Foundation Board Member, Balloons Over Vermilion Board Member, Vermilion Advantage Board Member, Kickapoo Rail Trail Member, Illinois Association of Housing Authorities Board Member, Assisted Housing Risk Management Association Board Member.

Proudest professional accomplishment: I am appreciative of the fact that we have been able to take two Housing Authorities that were on the brink of HUD Receivership and turn them around into a financially stable, policy driven, community partner which works diligently to provide housing assistance throughout Vermilion County.

I attribute my success to ... My upbringing. My parents are both successful individuals who overcame their own unique obstacles to get to where they are today. In raising my siblings and me, they instilled values like honesty, kindness and self-worth, which led to my ability to exhibit confidence. Confidence not just in myself but also in those around me. Also, no is never an acceptable answer for me.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I have two spectrum's of patience — absolutely no patience at all or that of a river carving out a canyon. Both are equally helpful.

To relax I ... My definition of relaxing isn't sitting still. If I'm not doing something, I feel like I should be. That being said, when I need a break I go outside: take a walk, ride the Kickapoo Mountain Bike Trails or Kickapoo Rail Trail, take the kids to a park, play in a body of water, or work in the yard.

From the nominator: "I have worked with many young leaders, NONE with the drive, intelligence, initiative and heart as Jaclyn Vinson. She cares deeply about her tenants, strives to provide the resources for her staff to grow and improve and gives back to the community to the fullest." — Patrick O'Shaughnessy, *retired*

MICHAEL VITTONE | 36

CPA, Director of Assurance, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP

Community involvement: I have been lucky to get involved with the United Way of Champaign County starting out on their Finance Committee a number of years ago. I currently chair that committee and serve on their Board of Directors and Executive Committee as Treasurer. As a graduate of their ECL program I am always looking to volunteer at a handful of events each year for different local not-for-profit organizations. I also love to shop locally and support local businesses as often as I can, there are still so many wonderful places in Champaign-Urbana to go.

Proudest professional accomplishment: Passing the CPA exam in my first try.

I attribute my success to ... I'd like to say a mix of hard work, a calm demeanor, and setting goals. However it's probably due to having a great support system around me, getting opportunities to succeed, and a bit of luck.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... Measure twice, cut once.

An important fact you may not know about me ... I spent over 10 years in a punk band playing around 800 shows during that time.

Most important lesson I've learned in my professional career is ... Your path is not written in stone and it can change, so be open to change

To relax I ... Play the guitar, cook, hang out in my workshop

From the nominator: "There are two qualities of Michael's that stand out to me everyday, he is a problem solver and he is thoughtful of others. I love the combination of these two traits. Michael not only has performed at a very high professional level himself but has done that while being passionate about mentoring others and helping them achieve their professional goals." — Beth Auterman, *CliftonLarsonAllen*



SHAWNA WALLER | 39

Co-Owner, Counselor, **Accent Counseling**; Co-Administrator, Mental Health Clinician, **READY Program**

Community involvement: I work with several local school districts providing mental health services and classroom strategies for behavior management, looking for ways to help support both the teachers and the students. I co-facilitate a moral reconstruction group at the Juvenile Detention Center. I work with several agencies and local business leaders on ways to stop our communities' gun violence. I serve on the board of directors for Cross Camp Mission Trips, a not-for-profit organization that allows local youth the opportunity to give back to the community by serving others in the form of community service activities.

Proudest professional accomplishment: Purchasing our counseling agency in 2017.

I attribute my success to ... my work ethic, eagerness to learn, and overall love for people. I credit my Mom and Grandmother for instilling those qualities in me from a very young age.

Best advice I can give or have received is ... to never allow another person the power to take you out of your character. Respond to people and treat people the way that feels best to you, always trying to align those responses with whom you strive to be. How people treat you is a reflection of them, how you respond is a reflection of you.

An important fact you may not know about me ... is that my brothers and I are known to rap Vanilla Ice at family functions that include a microphone. I am the middle child and only girl.

What's your one unbreakable rule? Never give up. I truly believe that most things have an answer, you just can't allow yourself to give up before you find it.

From the nominator: "Shawna spends extensive time with youth of the community volunteering her time and resources to help put them in better positions. She works collaboratively with other like-minded members of the community to find ways to help fight against gun violence and find ways to promote safety and inclusiveness." — **Karli Hall**, *Accent Counseling*



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Get ready, Gen Z is hitting the workforce

Laura Weis
CIB Contributor



This month's Central Illinois Business Magazine celebrates Champaign County's 2021 class of 40 emerging leaders under 40. The year 2021 also marks 40 years since the birth of the first millennials. It is a bittersweet recognition of the end of a generation that challenged business leaders to think differently about the workforce and workplace.

For 40 years, millennials have been subject to criticism, research and conversation. But this massive generation has been a force to be reckoned with since they entered the workforce. Millennials required employers to have essential conversations about generational differences in their workplaces. They challenged managers to evolve and place greater emphasis on collaboration and flexibility. If we are truth-telling, they likely taught boomers and Xers a bit about the importance of work-life balance. Millennials are no longer the 20-somethings that made boomers and Generation X roll their eyes. They have risen to senior management positions and decision-making roles.

In 2022, when Champaign County recognizes the next group of Forty under 40, Gen Z will be the freshman class. They will be the first digital natives to enter the workforce. The bad news for employers is that everything we thought we knew about managing a younger generation will change. The good news is that the combination of millennials in leadership roles, and the entrance of the massive, digitally savvy Gen Z population (estimated to be 61 million people), will most likely drive considerable innovation.

It is impossible to assign a list of characteristics to 61 million people and believe that they all share those features. Researchers who determine the generations do so by grouping populations shaped by events during their formative years. Those who studied Gen Z consciously defined them by identifying people who have no real memory of the tragic 9/11 attacks.

Academics based their characteristic assignments on kids who grew up in a world where threats of terrorism, school shootings and the 2008 Great Recession were commonplace. This generation watched their Gen X parents lose jobs and struggle financially. They are the first fully digital generation. All of this informed and molded their lives, beliefs and behaviors.

So, what do employers need to know as Gen Z enters the workforce? This new generation is highly competitive. Studies


of the group affirm that they are very concerned about personal success. Research indicates that professional and academic success is central to the Gen Z identity. But interestingly, academic success does not equate to pursuing a college degree. Gen Z wants a happy professional life, but financial stability is a stronger motivation (the opposite of millennials' attributes). This driver makes Gen Z consider the value of higher education versus the debt of student loans.

Generation Z will not be job hoppers as financial security is too important to them. They will, however, be role hoppers. Gen Z will welcome the opportunity to jump out of their defined job to take on projects or assist with something not part of their everyday responsibilities. That's excellent news for employers who may need a second set of hands for a project. "That's not my job" is not likely a phrase employers will hear from this new workforce.

For members of Gen Z, the smartphone is for information, entertainment and education first — and communication second. Their teaching will come via digital tutorials and job training videos. This generation does not want to communicate with the world through email, text or phone. Instead, they value face-to-face conversations. But in contrast, as much as they love human connection, they want their own workspace. Unlike the millennials before them, Gen Z does not want to work in collaborative spaces.

One attribute millennials and Gen Z share is that they want flexibility in their job. They desire to get their work done on a timetable that might exist outside 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Again, because they are digital natives, Gen Z can and will adapt to remote working far more efficiently than any previous generation. Plus, this new workforce has a stronger ability to change and adapt, bring together information and process it, and then act on that information. Employers will need to figure out how to unleash this generation to have the freedom to innovate.

Regardless of whether the attributes assigned to Gen Z are accurate or not, the fact is they are about to become one-third of the workforce. Their tech-savvy, confident, competitive nature will also be a force to be reckoned with for years to come.

Best wishes and congratulations to this year's Forty Under 40 class. You mark the end of an era. But you are privileged to help usher in a new, up-and-coming generation. Together, both you and the members of Gen Z will innovate and change our world. 

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