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MARCH 2023

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Bobbi Earles

# ANTIQUES

Everything **old** is **new** again

Lisa Hammel, co-owner of Shaggy's Indoor Flea Market

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# **bizTiMES**<sub>biz</sub>

March 2023  
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Co-owner  
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Indoor Flea  
Market Lisa  
Hammel.

Photo by  
Dave Kettering

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For the Twitter feed, go to [@biztimes.dbq](https://twitter.com/biztimes.dbq)

# New 'Faces' at BizTimes

This month marks the first full issue for new managing editors Megan Gloss and Anthony Frenzel.

Megan is the features editor at the Telegraph Herald, as well as editor of TH Media's Her magazine. She's been with the organization for 20 years.

Anthony is in his 18th year with TH Media, where he's held a variety of positions. He's worked on the layout and cover for BizTimes for the past nine years.

Both look forward to bringing you the same excellent coverage of the tri-state area business world that has been a hallmark of BizTimes for



Megan Gloss



Anthony Frenzel

more than 30 years.

In addition to those new faces, next month BizTimes will launch a feature, Faces in Business, replacing Meet a Local Leader. Turn to page 22 for more details.

Have a story idea? Interested in writing for BizTimes? email [megan.gloss@thmedia.com](mailto:megan.gloss@thmedia.com) and [tony.frenzel@thmedia.com](mailto:tony.frenzel@thmedia.com).

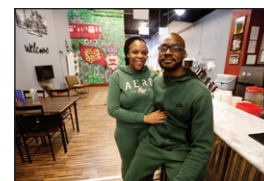
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# TH MEDIA



A photograph of three people riding bicycles across a wooden bridge. From left to right: a man in an orange shirt, a man in a black shirt, and a woman in a grey shirt. They are all wearing helmets and smiling. The background shows a city street with buildings and trees.

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# ANTIQUES

## Everything **old** is **new** again

*Editor's note: Between the writing of this piece and its publication, Ronn Toebeas passed away.*

BY JILL CARLSON

**W**hether it's antique furniture, vinyl records, vintage toys, jewelry, old advertising signage, wood yardsticks from long-gone businesses, stamps, coins, vintage clothing or hundreds of other items, chances are someone collects it and is always on the hunt to add to their collection of treasures.

The hunt to find antiques could lead to consignment shops, flea markets, antiques malls or shops, estate or garage sales and thrift shops. There are also online options such as Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, eBay and local buying and selling groups.

As a guide, to be considered an antique, an item has to be at least 100 years old. The term "vintage" is used for items that are at least 40 years old. "Retro" are items that are at least 20 years old, but less than 40 years old. Midcentury modern, or MCM, which is very popular right now is defined as items from the middle of the 20th century, from 1933 to 1965.

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## AN ECLECTIC MIX

Antique shops are one of the many things that draw tourists to Galena. Ronn Toebaas is a Galena antiques dealer at Peace of the Past North, an antiques shop owned by Bill Karberg. Karberg started his first shop, Peace of the Past in 1992 on S. Main Street and opened his second shop, Peace of the Past North in 2013 on N. Main Street.

"When Bill opened his second shop, he invited me to join him as an associate with space to sell my own antiques," Toebaas said. "We've been in business together for 10 years and it's been a wonderful experience."

"Before that, I had dabbled in antiques, having garage sales and doing periodic antiques flea markets. I was frequently a picker looking for and buying collectible items for other antiques dealers. When Bill offered me space in his shop, I jumped at the opportunity."

Toebaas describes the shop as an "very eclectic mix of antiques and collectibles



Dave Kettering

Ronn Toebaas with Peace of the Past North in Galena, Ill.

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Mero Creative

"Collectors are interesting people. It's a pleasure to help them find their treasures."

**Ronn Toebaas**

To be considered an antique, an item has to be at least 100 years old.



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along with a large selection of artwork.

"Bill specializes in books, pottery crocks, vintage record albums, beer memorabilia and one-of-a-kind primitives," he said. "I carry Native American pottery, baskets, turquoise jewelry, Scandinavian pieces and vintage costumes and clothing."

Toebaas said there is a collector for just about anything imaginable and he's seeing a younger generation who are buying and appreciating older items.

"Old books are always in demand," he said. "Young people are drawn to old technology including old cameras, telephones and typewriters. And the younger buyers like to repurpose vintage pieces — old barn ladders become shelves, towel bars and racks for hanging kitchen utensils. Old canning jars become storage containers for flour, sugar, rice and pasta. Old suitcases are stacked to create end tables."

"Collectors are interesting people. It's a pleasure to help them find their treasures."

Continued on page 8

## DEFINING PLACES TO FIND ANTIQUES AND VINTAGE ITEMS

**Antiques mall:** Antiques dealers rent booth space on a monthly basis to sell furniture, linens, artwork and other collectibles. Some mall owners ask dealers to work at the mall a specific number of hours per month. The mall owner takes a percentage of the items sold.

**Consignment shop:** Customers bring items such as designer clothing and accessories, artwork and other high-end items to sell. The shop owner takes a percentage when the item is sold.

**Flea markets:** Usually held outdoors in a parking lot or field. Sellers rent space to sell secondhand goods.

**Thrift stores:** Community members donate items so that the organization (usually a nonprofit) running the shop raises money to fund their programs.

**Vintage store:** Specializes in clothing, vinyl albums, toys, decor, housewares and other items that are older than 40 years.



Dave Kettering

Co-owner of Shaggy's Indoor Flea Market Lisa Hammel arranges items in a display case in the Dubuque store located off of North Crescent Ridge.



“I believe antique items were made with better quality and a lot of them are handmade. Each item has a story to be told, and I love helping spark nostalgic memories when customers come to my store.”

**Lisa Hammel**

**Continued from page 7**

### HONORING HISTORY

Lisa Hammel likes the history of antiques. In June 2017, Hammel opened Shaggy's Indoor Flea Market with her husband Brian and their two children Bryce and Brisa.

“I believe antique items were made with better quality and a lot of them are handmade,” Hammel said. “Each item has a story to be told, and I love helping spark nostalgic memories when customers come to my store. The flea market is named after our late family dog, Shaggy, who is our inspiration in naming the business.”

It's fitting that the business is named after Shaggy as the store is located in the former Dubuque Regional Humane Society building.

Shaggy's has 140 antiques dealers selling tens of thousands of items that range from 150-plus years old to new.

“My vendors fill their booths with anything they think will sell,” Hammel said. “I never know what my vendors will bring in.

**Continued on page 10**



Shaggy's Indoor Flea Market located at 175 North Crescent Ridge in Dubuque.



Shaggy's Indoor Flea Market is named after owner Lisa Hammel's family dog.



A woman with dark, curly hair, wearing an orange button-down shirt and a blue and white striped apron, stands with her arms crossed and a warm smile. She is wearing a gold watch and a thin necklace. The background is a blurred interior of a cafe or restaurant with tables and chairs.

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Vintage shopping also can be good for the environment.



Bill Karberg at Peace of the Past.



Peace of the Past, 408 S. Main St., Galena, Ill.

Continued from page 8

A lot of the items are collectible items, vinyl records, glassware, home decor, tools and so much more. I always say there is something for everyone at Shaggys's. You truly never know what you will find."

Hammel said that albums, uranium glassware, brass and collectibles sell well at the flea market and that she's seeing a younger demographic buying antiques and collectibles.

"Flea markets are great for budget conscious shoppers," she said. "It's easy to find good deals because our items are priced below retail stores. We also like to barter on things. If you see something and want to make an offer, we can always contact the vendor.

"Vintage items are also popular as they are a better quality and will last many more generations. The price point is also usually cheaper than buying the same item new. Vintage items tend to be made in America more often than new items made today."

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"Flea markets are great for budget conscious shoppers. It's easy to find good deals because our items are priced below retail stores. We also like to barter on things. If you see something and want to make an offer, we can always contact the vendor."

**Lisa Hammel**



## GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

According to [terramovement.com](https://terramovement.com), buying antiques and vintage items is good for the environment as they have a longer life-cycle and lower carbon footprint, which is around 16 times less than that of a newly manufactured piece of furniture. Antiques have a smaller impact on the environment as they were often made by hand without the use of electricity, chemicals and man-made materials.

Reusing vintage items and antiques also keeps them out of the landfill and reduces the consumption of new goods made outside the U.S. One of the leading causes of climate change is deforestation, and the furniture industry contributes heavily to deforestation. Buying antiques uses what has already been produced and provides the buyer with long lasting items.



Metro Creative







Jennifer Bardon makes a drink at The Spot Nutrition in Dubuque.



# The Spot Nutrition is the spot for energy and community

BY ANGELA JONES •  
PHOTOS BY JESSICA REILLY

As soon as you enter The Spot Nutrition on Main Street, you know something special is in the air. Maybe it's the friendly greeting, or the bright and airy space, or the promise of natural energy in a cup to give you a boost. It's a combination of these, but ultimately Alex and Angela Lee are what give the space and the experience its warmth.

Having taken over The Spot one year ago this May from Brittany Tyson, the Lees bring a resume of work in human resources (Alex), education (Angela) and service (both). On top of these professional experiences, they both hold master's degrees from the University of Dubuque — his in business administration and hers in management and communication.

But resumes alone don't promise success. Their business plan involves more than just good products and a lively location, it also means treating customers as neighbors.

And the neighborhood is buzzing.

Of course, the buzz comes from the naturally derived beverages, like Lit Tea and Boba Tea, protein donuts and shakes and combination teas that support lifestyle nutrition choices and situations — like diabetes or keto, as well as pre- and post-workout options. And if your time is short, they offer curbside pickup and free delivery.

"Business is picking up," Alex said. "We're using different marketing (strategies) and are emphasizing that we're kid and family friendly."

The Lees are not just running their shop and sitting back, either — more events involving the community are on the horizon.

"We have too many ideas," Angela



Angela and Alex Lee own The Spot Nutrition in Dubuque.

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Angela Lee (left) and Jennifer Bardon make drinks.



Angela Lee (right) rings up Kayla Lieb, of Dubuque.



**Continued from page 13**

said. "We want to offer a workout class, like yoga with B-1 Yoga. And we'll be posting more events soon."

These events also include Lit Tea and paint nights, teen and game nights and additional local art and poetry slams.

For Black History Month, the Lees arranged to hold free Black As You Are Art and poetry slams hosted by Briana Thompson, and they are planning to display more local artwork soon, with an emphasis on Black and underrepresented artists.

The Spot also selects a different nonprofit each week and invites members of that group to stop in on that given Monday for a complimentary beverage.

The space is an ideal everyday spot, too, for parents to bring their young kids to play miniature versions of cornhole, basketball, foosball and board games or puzzles while the adults sit back and sip in some natural energy (without the crash from coffee and sugar).

**Continued on page 16**

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Angela Lee (left) talks with Nakiah Kimble, of Dubuque.



### Continued from page 15

Their ideas continue to expand further into the community, too.

“For our one-year anniversary in May, there will be a customer appreciation day with raffles and specials,” Alex said. “We want to give back for being supported. We give \$1 from every drink to the Avery Foundation, which helps people with money for cancer care. We also get involved with community events and organizations, like the Back to School Bash and Black Men’s Coalition.”

The Lees also weave the community into their daily business.

“Each day I post what the flavors are that day and also highlight different organizations — what the organizations do in the community,” Angela said.

They see the importance of shopping locally and of supporting small businesses, organizations and individuals, especially those who give so much to the community members, like teachers, she said.

And they’ve met their goal of creating a “home feel” by the intentional way they engage with the community.

“We love helping and giving back,” Alex said. “We do it to highlight professions that don’t get much love.”

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# Workforce retention and recruitment strategies



**KARLA  
WALDBILLIG**  
Stonehill  
Communities

She is vice president  
of human resources  
at the Dubuque  
institution

During this unprecedented time of workforce shortages, according to the World Bank, during the next decade, the number of people of working age (between 15 and 65) will decline in the U.S. by more than 3% annually.

Locally, the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation reported a January unemployment rate of 2.7% for Dubuque — down from 4% in the prior year — and an increase of 675 jobs posted during the past year paired with an increase in workforce of just 100 people. The supply of individuals available to work cannot keep up with the need for workers in open jobs.

Key strategies for recruiting and retaining employees become even more important in the current workforce landscape.

## CULTURE

Workplace culture is the most important strategy. Culture can be created with intention or developed organically, but every organization has a culture. Having a culture where employees feel valued, feel appreciated and find purpose in their work is essential.

The voice of the employee matters more than ever. How do you hear from your employees? What do you do with the information shared? Does your organization need an employee experience manager?

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The old saying is still true: Employees leave their manager not their job. Leadership development that grows your organization's leadership skills is essential. How leaders treat, interact, reward, discipline, coach, communicate and model behavior is critical to retain good employees.

Empower leaders to work with individuals that do not fit the culture of the organization to find better career options. Employees will tell you that nothing is more frustrating than seeing a manager tolerate bad behaviors from coworkers. At times, employees would rather take on the extra work to have an incompatible team member leave in order to decrease issues and drama.

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Many organizations are moving to a skills-based hiring model. Instead of expecting people to go

through traditional higher education, employees learn on the job. What can your organization train employees to do? What characteristics are needed to be successful in your field?

A good hiring philosophy is to hire for attitude and train for skill. If higher education is required, how is your organization helping to pay for higher education? Are you paying for courses, books, fees or supplies? Time off the job to be in class? Day-care while employees are in class? Transportation to classes? What barriers do your employees have

in getting education and how is the organization removing those barriers to grow the workforce you need?

## KARLA SAYS

Workplace culture is the most important strategy. Culture can be created with intention or developed organically, but every organization has a culture. Having a culture where employees feel valued, feel appreciated and find purpose in their work is essential.

## EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Wellness has become a critical topic for organizations and another way to support and retain employees, with an increasing focus on mental wellness. There are several training programs available on the basics of understanding mental health.

How is your organization supporting employees' mental health? How are you supporting and promoting physical health as a component of mental health? Does your organization have an effective employee assistance program? What community resources are available for your team? Do you need social worker support in your human resources department?

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Do all employees feel welcomed, included, part of the group, valued and appreciated for their differences? Diversity, equity and inclusion are more than hot topics and "nice to do" things. If an employee does not feel like a valuable part of the

team, the employee will not stay. Every organization needs a plan to welcome, train, integrate and follow up with new hires to ensure the job, the organization and managers are meeting needs and expectations.

## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Are your benefits meeting the needs of the employees and their families? If you are not the top payer in your industry and area, employee benefits become a key factor in recruitment and retention.

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**Continued from page 18**

However, the cost of benefits for employers continues to increase.

Do you evaluate the effectiveness of your benefits plan while monitoring the rising costs? What percent of the cost do you pass to the employee? Are there free benefits or discount programs that can be offered? Which benefits are used the most by employees?

Don't forget to share information with employees including community benefits and opportunities such as parks, walking paths, bike trails, arts and entertainment, community organizations, clubs, and events. Employees might not be aware of all the community has to offer.

**FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility in the job can be an inexpensive yet huge benefit if the job duties allow. Can you offer more flexible opportunities for hours per shift or shifts per week? Not all positions can offer flexibility, but this can be more important than pay and benefits to some employees.

Flexibility helps working parents and family caregivers to balance family and work. Remote work allows you to hire beyond your local radius and consider people from all across the country or the world. Remote work can open up op-

Flexibility in the job can be an inexpensive yet huge benefit if the job duties allow. Can you offer more flexible opportunities for hours per shift or shifts per week?

portunities for employees to travel and vacation because they can work from anywhere and pursue their interests or sightsee during the off hours.

One thing is for certain, the ability to change quickly, adjust expectations, think outside of the box and take new and individualized approaches to meet employee needs will be required to retain the workforce needed going forward. Listening to your employees and acting on their requests is a great place to start.

**BIZ LOCAL****CITY RECEIVES BEST-IN-CLASS AWARD**

The City of Dubuque received a Gallagher's Best-in-Class award, which recognizes employers for their support of employees' physical, emotional, career and financial well-being.

**SOUTHWEST HEALTH RECEIVES EXCELLENCE AWARD**

Southwest Health, of Platteville, Wis., received a Guardian of Excellence Award for Inpatient care and a Guardian of Excellence Award for Employee Experience from Press Ganey.

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# What to do when someone takes credit for your work



**LISA  
MCLEOD**

She is an author  
and business  
consultant

You brought up a great idea in a meeting, and the team ran with it — they ran so far, in fact, the idea is no longer yours. It's now a "team effort." Or maybe you offered your boss a keen insight, one they took right to the executive team, proudly presenting it as their own. Perhaps you stayed late, expertly perfecting a client pitch, only to have your colleagues to take all the credit the following morning.

It's frustrating.

As the creator of "Noble Purpose," I'm well familiar with the power of sticky language. Every time I get a Google alert about someone using the language I created (and trademarked) I click, hoping that they will be referencing my work. Usually they aren't.

One of my friends said something to me early in my career that (most of the time) keeps me grounded — good ideas don't remember their parents. Case in point, people talk about Find Your Why without realizing Simon Sinek popularized it, and "Good to Great" was trademarked by Jim Collins decades before it became a common catchphrase.

When you have good ideas or produce good work, it often takes a life of its own. But that doesn't make it's any less frustrating, particularly in the world of work, where promotions, raises and opportunities are doled out based on who produces what.

Here are three tips for navigating the tricky situation when someone else takes credit for your work:

## RESPOND WITH KINDNESS — THE FIRST TIME

In many cases, the person taking credit for your work doesn't even realize they're doing it. That doesn't mean you should let it slide, but it's best for your professional reputation to reserve calling out an "idea thief" for later down the road.

Initially, responding with kindness typically acknowledges the enthusiasm of the other person while also owning your own contributions. You can say something like:

- "I'm so glad my initial idea resonated with you."
- "When I first thought of it, what was most exciting to me was ..."
- "I'm thrilled with how well the client received our presentation, when I was working on it last night, my

main goal was to ..."

The vast majority of the time, this language technique will alert the other person to what's happening, while allowing them to maintain their professional dignity.

## TREAT OTHERS' IDEAS HOW YOU WANT YOURS TO BE TREATED

Making a proactive effort to lift up the work of other people will, over time, start to create a culture of recognition (of which you, too, will benefit).

Some of President Obama's female staff made a regular practice of this. According to the Washington Post, "Female staffers adopted a meeting strategy they called 'amplification': When a woman made a key point, other women would repeat it, giving credit to its author."

Your personal politics aside, this strategy works. Saying something like, "I love Jane's idea, let's continue to build on it," keeps the energy moving forward and firmly established who originated it.

## TAKE CREDIT EARLY

"I don't want to brag." It's a common lament. We all want to be appreciated for our hard work, yet many of us are reluctant to tout our accomplishments.

The braggarts who annoy you are likely those who talk endlessly about themselves. Don't let their obnoxious self-promotion make you think that's the only way to get recognition.

Instead, highlight your accomplishments in the context of the difference they make to someone else or the organization. It's more comfortable to say, "Here's the result" vs. "Look at me, look at me." This framing

amplifies your impact without making it all about you. It enables you to get the credit you deserve while also emphasizing the value you bring to your team or organization.

Want more tips on how to gracefully take credit? Check out my LinkedIn post, "How to Highlight Your Accomplishments without Bragging."

It can be a discouraging experience to bring your best work forth and not get any recognition. But often, this moment isn't intended as the personal affront we interpret it to be.

Handling these moments with kindness, and a steadfast resolve to own your contributions, is of service to your entire organization.

### LISA SAYS

When you have good ideas or produce good work, it often takes a life of its own. But that doesn't make it's any less frustrating, particularly in the world of work, where promotions, raises and opportunities are doled out based on who produces what.





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# Bobbi Earles

Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque

**Editor's note:** The monthly BizTimes feature Meet a Local Leader is getting a face-lift starting next month. We're broadening the scope to include more than just business leaders. Anyone with an interesting perspective, a strong story or a potent effect in their field could be featured in the new Faces in Business. Stay tuned for new questions, new faces and a new look starting next month.

**B**obbi Earles is vice president of philanthropy and communications at Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque.

A former KWWL television reporter and Loras College graduate, Earles points to the people she's met over the years as an important influence.

"Over the years, I have been fortunate to have opportunities to meet some incredible people, far too many to call out by name," Earles said. "However, early in my career as a reporter, there was one young girl I interviewed who had cancer. She said something that has stuck with me and something I strive to live up to. When she was talking about her treatment she explained, 'No one knows what will happen, so I've decided it's not how long I live — but how I live my life.' She was wise beyond her years and taught me an important lesson."

Earles' family includes two daughters, a son-in-law, her husband and a "fun-loving" aussie-doodle. She loves to spend time outdoors and also enjoys cooking.

"My family is my everything," she said. "No matter the season, I love to be outside. Whether it is taking our dog for a walk, snow shoeing or biking. Cooking is something I find to be very therapeutic. I have witnessed when you take time to share food, you also engage in great conversation and that is good for the soul."







Earles career has included working as a news reporter for KWWL, as well as several positions with her alma mater, Loras College.

## in her words

Listening. It is an overlooked skill that is so instrumental in doing your job well, whether you are leading a team, a project or flying solo. By talking less and listening more, you have the opportunity to learn and understand, which can lead to a successful outcome.

### Can you name a person who has had a tremendous impact on you as a leader?

I believe there are a number of people who influence you on a daily basis. For me it has been my parents, my siblings, my husband, my children — I also recognize there are those incredible individuals you meet along the way that leave a lasting impression.

When I was in high school, my speech teacher, Mrs. Tilton, was one of those people. Everyone should have a Mrs. Tilton as a teacher at one point in their life. She had an incredible way of getting people involved with speech and drama. I didn't realize it at the time, but Mrs. Tilton was a master at getting you to try things outside your comfort zone. She challenged us to do more than we thought we could and isn't that what good leaders do?

After college, Grant Price, the news director at KWWL, hired me as a cub reporter, photographer and producer. He was just a few years from retirement but approached his job like someone half his age.

What I always appreciated was Grant never placed boundaries or barriers in my way. He outlined expectations and then trusted you to deliver. He treated everyone with respect, and we found ourselves working to earn his in return. There were three things Grant expected from everyone: Be succinct in telling the story, be fair and balanced in your reporting and be on time. You had to hit your deadline.

### What are the most important decisions you make as a leader of your organization?

It's not the decisions I make, it's the conversations I have with others. In my role at the Community Foundation, I share the needs and opportunities within our community with donors who want to make a difference. When you partner passion with a philanthropic heart, everyone wins. At the end of the day, our goal is to be a resource to donors, nonprofits, professional advisers, businesses and anyone who is interested in building a vibrant and inclusive region.

### As an organization gets larger, there can be a tendency for the "institution" to dampen the "inspiration." How do you keep this from happening?

Creating a culture where others want to be should be the goal of every employer. You can start off your day by looking at your work as a challenge or you can champion it and recognize its impact within the organization. I am surrounded with individuals who believe in our mission and each plays a role in sharing our purpose with others. My inspiration comes from the people we serve and the impact we have.

## DO YOU KNOW THE NEXT PERSON TO BE FEATURED?

Do you know someone with an interesting perspective. Is there someone in your organization who has an compelling story to tell? Let us know and they could be featured in a future edition of Faces in Business. Email [tony.frenzel@thmedia.com](mailto:tony.frenzel@thmedia.com) and [megan.gloss@thmedia.com](mailto:megan.gloss@thmedia.com) with your suggestions.

### Which is more important to your organization — mission, core values or vision?

Our mission is to "Strengthen communities and inspire giving" — it is at the core of everything we do and feeds into our values and vision, "to create a vibrant and inclusive region with resources and opportunities for all."

### What is one characteristic that you believe every leader should possess?

Listening. It is an overlooked skill that is so instrumental in doing your job well, whether you are leading a team, a project or flying solo. By talking less and listening more, you have the opportunity to learn and understand, which can lead to a successful outcome.

### What advice do you have for future leaders?

Be open to change. Own your mistakes, they will make you stronger. Support your team and help them advance. Pause to celebrate your successes but make sure you're looking forward more than you're looking back. Be the example for others to follow.

### What lessons can leaders take away from the pandemic?

Work culture has become more important than ever for both employees and employers. Assessing the needs of your organization, building a plan and outlining expectations allows everyone to feel good and have an understanding of how their work brings value to the organization.

### What are two or three of the best things about being a leader?

Collaborating with a creative and committed team. It is exciting to work with individuals who are passionate about the work they do and the impact they can have in our community. I find joy in seeing people grow beyond their potential. We often place limits on ourselves and when you break through that barrier, you begin to see your value you bring to your organization and your community.



## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: A Community Conversation on Arts and Culture



Representatives from the City of Dubuque, Dubuque Museum of Art, Grand Opera House, Dubuque Symphony Orchestra and local artists weighed in as panelists at the event.

**Stephen Gassman**



Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque and Community Development Officer Jason Neises speaks during the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion panel discussion.



A community conversation on inclusivity in arts and culture took place at Steeple Square.



Gene Tully, of Voices Productions, and other panelists listen to moderators during the event.



The event, which took place Feb. 8, was sponsored by TH Media and the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque.



Business After Hours



Stephen Gassman

Patient Carrie Leicht (left) and Certified CoolSculpting Technician Joy Musselman give a demonstration at Aesthetic Center by Medical Associates during a Business After Hours event.



The Business After Hours event was hosted by the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 21.



The next Business After Hours event will take place at Oak Park Place, 1381 Oak Park Place, on Tuesday, March 21.



Visitors tour the Aesthetic Center by Medical Associates in Dubuque.



# Goodbye, Sears. Now Chicago needs to nurture its next great company

CHICAGO  
TRIBUNE

Holiday traditions come and go, but for many Chicagoans of a certain age, Christmas started when the “Wish Book” arrived in the mailbox from Sears, Roebuck and Co.

This fat catalog usually came on a fall day, as the weather grew chilly, and the leaves turned colors. At its peak, the toy section alone ran for a couple of hundred thrilling pages. Alas, the Wish Book folded in 2011, and by the time the holidays roll around again later this year, the rest of Sears might be gone as well.

For retailers, the chilly period immediately after the holiday selling season brings a reckoning. Chain operations will use this time to clear inventories, revise merchandising strategies, shutter underperforming stores and otherwise get ready for what promises to be a tough new year, as inflation and the threat of a recession put a damper on shopping. Some chains are bracing for the worst: Bed Bath & Beyond announced that it might be forced to liquidate.

The latest news about Sears is, in a word, grave. When Sears and Kmart merged in 2005, they counted 3,500 stores in the U.S. In 2023, it would be no surprise if the store count finally hit zero.

When the chains combined, both were already spiraling downhill to the point that one business analyst compared the merger deal to conducting a transplant with a bad heart and a bad liver and expecting the outcome to be a healthy body.

Wall Street counted on Eddie Lampert, a wealthy investor, to cut costs and squeeze profits from the vast real estate holdings of the two companies. There was talk at the time about the fresh-faced financier becoming the next Warren Buffett.

Lampert promised moneymaking synergies, such as offering Sears’ popular Kenmore appliances and Craftsman tools at Kmart, and Kmart’s Martha Stewart line of housewares at Sears. But a costly effort to attract women shoppers to the “softer side” of Sears fizzled out and the stores became hollow shells, bereft of merchandise.

To make matters worse, a business that was the Amazon of its day back in the catalog-shopping era failed at moving its operations online. Though Lampert used financial maneuvers to keep the business going much longer than his critics anticipated, he never managed to compete against juggernauts like Walmart and Target, let alone Amazon.

Lampert was still running Sears in 2018, when it filed for bankruptcy to shed debt, bad leases and unprofitable stores. He brought the remains of the business out of bankruptcy in 2019. It had just 223 Sears and 202 Kmart

stores remaining nationwide.

Today, operating under a shell company, it retains at most a handful of full-line stores. A chain of small, franchisee-owned stores known as Sears Hometown is going out of business and Sears Auto Stores are kaput.

The Sears.com site does appear to be functional, albeit with most items actually coming from other sellers. And Sears Home Services, which offers appliance repairs and maintenance, is still operating.

No one from what’s left of Sears responded to a request for comment. Lately, this one-time bellwether of the retail industry has done most of its talking in courtrooms — including a dispute argued before the U.S. Supreme Court last month that pits the Mall of America against Sears over the rights to a former store at the Minnesota retail mecca.

In Chicago, Sears has no stores, but it lives on in other ways. Thousands of Chicagoans worked at Sears and still rely on retirement benefits that have been threatened along with the rest of the company’s financial obligations. Young people often don’t know that the large, locally

based companies, Allstate and Discover, were among the businesses spun off from the retail giant in its heyday, as was the highly successful Coldwell Banker real estate franchise.

The old Chicago main post office, recently renovated and reopened with high-profile new tenants, was originally needed to occupy its huge footprint in order to accommodate Sears’ and rival Montgomery Ward’s booming mail-order operations.

To aging Chicagoans, the Willis Tower will always be the Sears Tower, even though Sears moved its headquarters out of the iconic skyscraper to suburban Hoffman Estates 30 years ago, opening a sprawling new campus alongside Interstate 90, replete with a 2.3 million-square-foot corporate office and 273 acres, including 100 acres of undeveloped land. As recently as 2017, Hoffman Estates remained home to some 4,000 Sears employees.

And no one should forget that Sears took public money with its move to the suburbs: Illinois taxpayers will never see a return from the fortune in tax breaks and incentives promised to Sears when it moved. Such a folly.

What hurts most is the realization that Chicago nurtured one of America’s great companies and then watched it die a slow, painful death — self-inflicted to the extent that it failed to innovate and capitalize on its successive generations of market power.

The demise of Sears is a reminder that Chicago can give birth to commercial greatness. The city needs to prove it can do so again.

## IN THEIR WORDS

To aging Chicagoans, the Willis Tower will always be the Sears Tower, even though Sears moved its headquarters out of the iconic skyscraper to suburban Hoffman Estates 30 years ago ...



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# Recovering from Big Tech's lost decade

ROGER  
MCNAMEE  
Los  
Angeles  
Times

For 65 years, the United States has counted on its digital tech industry to create amazing products and drive economic growth. For most of that time, the industry has exceeded expectations.

During the past decade, however, the tech industry has lost its way, with a culture, products and business models that have undermined democracy, public health and public safety.

Recent global events create an opportunity for the industry to reset and it is vitally important that it do so. America needs its technology industry to solve problems, not aggravate them. But we cannot expect the industry to transform itself without proper incentives, which must come from government and voters.

Today's tech industry, much of which dates only to the early 2000s, has been allowed to operate with no regulatory constraints. Entrepreneurs and investors have focused their energy on growing as rapidly as possible to massive scale and profits, without consideration for community values such as consumer safety, democracy, public health and human autonomy.

For more than a decade after the financial crisis of 2008-2009, the global economy was stable, with exceptionally low inflation and interest rates. Stability in international trade enabled supply chains optimized for short term cost.

As a country, we might have used this environment to tackle the greatest challenges facing humanity, such as climate change and income inequality. Instead, we allowed corporations to set their own priorities. They pursued wealth and power, with strategies that aggravated every problem in society. No industry did more harm than tech.

Some new technologies, such as facial recognition, got financed without a constructive use case. Other new industries, like ride sharing, ignored existing laws and regulations, consumed massive amounts of capital and produced staggering losses, all in pursuit of a monopoly that might eventually lead to profits. In artificial intelligence, entrepreneurs asserted that huge data sets would make our lives better, despite overwhelming evidence of bias and bad outcomes.

Low interest rates and inflation encouraged investors to take ever greater risk, so they kept throwing money at tech startups. The bigger the promise, the higher the valuation. Entrepreneurs responded with ever crazier ideas.

Eventually, investors funded business plans that depended on suspending the laws of physics or finance. The self-driving vehicles sector claimed not to need the special lanes or beacons on obstacles that are standard for autonomous aircraft and ships. They asserted that AI and sensors in the vehicle would be good enough, despite copious evidence to the contrary. The crypto industry built a Ponzi scheme on top of bad computer science.

Each of these ideas had skeptics, but their warnings were not enough to overcome the enthusiasm of investors deter-

mined to own a piece of the next big thing. At the peak earlier this year, more than 1,000 startups had a valuation of a billion dollars or more, many with little or no revenue.

The COVID pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have shaken global stability. Interest rates and inflation have spiked, and geopolitical tension is forcing changes in the international economy. Governments are no longer willing to subordinate other concerns to economic growth. Supply chains built on low labor costs are being restructured. This might be the beginning of a new economic era.

Despite prospering in the early days of the pandemic, the tech sector has hit a wall. Nasdaq has declined by nearly a third in 2022, while 448 individual stocks have declined by 70% or more. It might get worse, as few of the new tech companies have produced material revenues. Of those that went public in the past decade, only one has made it into the Fortune 500, Coinbase, at No. 437. It remains to be seen what societal benefits, if any, will result from the tech industry's past decade.

The transformation of the global economy creates big incentives for a tech reset. Consumers face shortages for many products. Corporations must relocate manufacturing closer to demand.

The lesson Americans should learn from the past decade is that failing to regulate tech leads to catastrophic harm.

We clung to five myths: There is only one path for the tech industry; new technology is always better; markets are always the best way to allocate resources; industries will self-regulate in the public interest; and there is no meaningful role for government as a referee of capitalism.

In fact, the current path relies on perverse incentives — change the incentives to change the direction of tech. New technology is not necessarily better. Markets are not always good at allocating resources, as the pandemic demonstrated. Companies cannot be expected to regulate themselves if they can make more money by not doing so. If capitalism is to operate for the public good, government must act as the referee.

The path forward should require tech products to meet standards of safety analogous to food and drugs, with a new agency like the Food and Drug Administration to certify safety as a condition of market access. We should acknowledge that using personal data undermines human autonomy and should be banned. To enable new products and business models to emerge, we should eliminate the monopoly power of today's tech giants.

*McNamee is a co-founder of Elevation Partners and author of "Zucked: Waking Up to the Facebook Catastrophe."*

## ROGER SAYS

The transformation of the global economy creates big incentives for a tech reset. Consumers face shortages for many products. Corporations must relocate manufacturing closer to demand.



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# Empowering people to change with hope



**KATHIE  
ROTZ**  
Unity  
Consulting

She is a leadership consultant and John Maxwell Certified speaker, trainer and coach with the Dubuque business

Hope is a belief in action. It is an active word that empowers people to do something toward desired change.

At the end of 2022, I was one of 60 coaches to travel to Papua New Guinea on a service trip where we facilitated a process called "Transformation Tables." A complete Transformation Table experience is a six to 12 week program where people gather to learn positive values and how to live them. During our time together, we discussed value words to help leaders think differently about the principles that guide their decisions and actions.

In one week, we connected with 1,400-plus Papua New Guineans in five cities. The value word we began with during the Transformation Table was "hope."

The people there have great hope. However, it is missing a spark. They believe that a better life is possible because they read stories in the Bible, history books and TikTok videos, but they rarely see an opportunity to create a better life in their community. Their hope is built from these stories and others' pasts.

I can empathize with my Papua New Guinea friends. When I lack an opportunity to feel confident in my abilities, I lean on the stories of others. I often think, "If someone else can find success, then I can, too."

However, belief without action can create frustration. What action do I need to take to find success?

One morning, in Kokopo, Papua New Guinea, I facilitated a table with a group of women. These women spoke of stress and frustration when thinking about all the responsibilities they encounter day-to-day. A single mother with five young boys, a minister's wife who feels the burden of her husband and a local leader hoping to

run for a political office in an upcoming election. These women believe change is needed and possible. However, they do not know what they can do to make a difference.

I saw a spark ignite in them during our Transformation Table. I gave them a booklet defining 12 value words and showed them how enjoyable it is to facilitate a table that promotes thinking differently. I recommended these women lead a table with their friends and family members. Their eyes lit up as they saw their vision of hope transform into reality.

Augustine of Hippo was a philosopher and bishop who believed humans are morally responsible for their actions. He described hope as having, "Two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

While in Papua New Guinea, I felt anger and frustration from my local friends. Anger at resources they're denied, like fresh water, the build-up of garbage on their streets and beaches and their government for not creating services and opportunities to better their country.

I am honored to also witness their courage build. Courage to think differently about their influence, empower their friends and family members to think about their values and introduce their neighbors to a new idea of Transformation Tables.

As I begin 2023 and consider what I hope this year brings, I think about the action I need to take to make it happen. It might be easier than I imagine it to be. It might be simple conversations where I share authentic and vulnerable ideas. Think differently, take action and watch hope come to life.

## KATHIE SAYS

When I lack an opportunity to feel confident in my abilities, I lean on the stories of others. I often think, "If someone else can find success, then I can, too."



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# Employer incentives after the pandemic



**GERALD  
KOPPES**

He is a retired instructor from Northeast Iowa College and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

As society slowly emerges from the devastating economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment rates continue to be at historic lows both in the local area and nationwide.

In this tight labor environment, employers have had to get creative to both hire new employees and keep those currently on the payroll from leaving for greener pastures or retiring early. A recent Sunday supplement to a local newspaper contained 12 pages of display ads from companies needing to fill the depleted ranks of their workforces.

Here are some observations this retired human resource director made after analyzing those advertisements and experiencing daily life in the post-pandemic world.

## OCCUPATIONS

The health care (including dentistry) sector is increasingly in need of employees. Advertisements offer sign-on bonuses, hourly rates of up to \$25 per hour and varied shifts with an emphasis on interesting work and pleasant working conditions.

Manufacturers also are offering attractive hourly rates, often with opportunities for paid onsite training. Unskilled workers looking to enter the labor market can expect to find offers of competitive pay and quick advancement. These employers also offer an attractive range of shifts: A regular eight-hour, five-day schedule; four 10-hour shifts; and even a 12-hour, three-day workweek. I've seen a couple of ads inviting applicants to create their own shifts and workdays.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL REWARDS

Some employers place an emphasis on the desirability of the work performed and the team environment in which it is accomplished. They understand that for many workers it's the psychological aspect of the work that is seen as most desirable. Compensation still must meet the minimum needs of these employees, but for them the company must be respected, the work must be meaningful and the employee must receive recognition for work well done.

## PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

The public sector is well represented in both print and online advertising. Employers in this career field often highlight the attractive pay and benefits, especially the generous defined benefit pension that offers an early retirement and a guaranteed payout, a feature not often included in less generous private sector 401(k) type plans.

In the past, military services used the "Be all you can be" slogan to attract high school graduates uncertain about their future plans. They offered training and adventure coupled with post-service educational benefits.

Surveys reveal that today's potential recruits see a military almost constantly engaged in foreign wars with soldiers returning home and suffering from PTSD. Military recruiters are now faced with the prospect of reviewing entrance requirements and the need to focus on quality-of-military-life issues in order to meet recruitment goals for an all-volunteer force.

In addition to print and online advertising, employers have increased their use of storefront notices as a recruitment tool. Pre-pandemic, it was not uncommon to find banners in widows or above employer's entryways announcing job openings. Today, employers, however, have increased the information provided to prospective employees. Upon entering the lobby, you will likely find a chart board with a specific list of openings highlighting the generous pay and the many benefits immediately available to the new hire.

Recently, technology companies have begun shedding employees after many years of aggressive hiring. It remains to be seen if these newly-separated workers will make a significant dent in the employment vacancies still existing in the economy, or if chronic understaffing will remain a festering problem.

The near-term solution appears to be improved productivity from current employees together with increased use of technology to accomplish the work no longer being done by those who have left the workforce and choose not to return.

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## TH MEDIA

**HIRED:** Sara Cluff as marketing manager. She previously worked as the marketing and events coordinator at Cartegraph. In her new role, Cluff will oversee the marketing department, which includes TH Media trips and local events.

## WOODWARD COMMUNITY MEDIA

**PROMOTED:** Andy Yarolim to business manager. He began working for the Telegraph Herald in 2012 as an advertising systems analyst and later was promoted to advertising systems manager and then group systems manager before assuming his current role.

## TELEGRAPH HERALD

**TRANSFERRED:** Steve Ortman from

the Telegraph Herald sports department to the Woodward Community Media centralized layout team.

## EASTERN IOWA MEDIA GROUP-NORTH

**HIRED:** Paul Marxen as account executive for outside sales.

## EXIT REALTY UNLIMITED

**HIRED:** Thea Dement as a real estate professional.

## MI-T-M CORP.

**PROMOTED:** Chris Oberender to paint division manager and Scott Howard to

Continued on page 33

## BIZ LOCAL

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Continued from page 32

assistant paint division manager.

## UNIFIED THERAPY SERVICES

**PROMOTED:** Sarah Adams to executive director.

## COTTINGHAM & BUTLER

**HIRED:** Gerald Hammel as senior financial services representative.

**HIRED:** Ellen Mensen as claims administrator.

**HIRED:** Carrie Scott as client relations manager.

**HIRED:** Shelbi Bedessem as account



Schaver



Hillers



Linkenheld



Bradley



Duarte



Sheldon

administrator.

**HIRED:** Dylan Chambers as sales executive.

**HIRED:** Frank Kneeland as sales executive.

**HIRED:** Brianna Zweibohmer as service representative.

**HIRED:** Trevor Schaver as IT app developer I.

**HIRED:** Brock Hillers as account ad-

ministrator.

**HIRED:** Thomas Linkenheld as client service representative.

**HIRED:** Tristan Bradley as sales executive.

**HIRED:** Benjamin Duarte as account administrator.

**HIRED:** Tommi Sheldon as claims co-

Continued on page 34



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Continued from page 33

ordinator.

**HIRED: Summer Ball** as client service representative.**HIRED: Megan Kluesner** as contractor services representative.**HIRED: Joseph Rodrigues** as client consultant.**HIRED: Timothy Kehde** as service representative.

## CLARKE UNIVERSITY

**ANNOUNCED: Steve Kapelke** will serve as its interim vice president of academic affairs.

## MEDICAL ASSOCIATES CLINIC

**ACHIEVEMENT: Dr. Stephanie Finch** passed the 2022 Internal Medicine Certification Examination and is board certified in internal medicine through American Board of Internal Medicine. She has been with the clinic since August.

## HILLS & DALES

**ANNOUNCED:** The following are members of the 2023 board of directors: President: **Charlie Hartig**, of Hartig Drug Inc.; vice president: **Tony Pfohl**, of The Fischer Companies; secretary/treasurer: **Brad Kemp**, of MidWestOne Bank; past president: **Jim Weber**, community volunteer. Members at large: **John Callahan**, of Medical Associates Clinic; **Joyce Connors**, community volunteer; **Eric Foy**, of HTLF; **Jim Holz**, of MSA Professional Services Inc.; **Nicole Johnson**, of PSSI; **Al Krueger**, community volunteer; **Judy Lochner**, community volunteer; **Dustin Manternach**, of Peninsula Pacific Entertainment; **Tori Richter**, of MidWestOne Bank; and **Chris Theisen**, of Theisen Supply Inc.The organization also announced the following members to the Jamie Barwick Hills & Dales Foundation board of directors: President: **Keith Sindberg**, of TRICOR Insurance; vice president: **Mike Ruden**, of Origin Design; secretary/treasurer: **Craig Schaefer**, of Loras College; past president: **Tom Fogel**, of Mulgrew Oil Co. Members at large: **Gary Dolphin**, community volunteer; **Brian Kane**, of Kane, Norby & Reddick P.C.; **Rob McDonald**, of A.Y. McDonald; **Tony Pfohl**, of The Fischer Companies; **Jan Powers**, of The Powers of Communication; and **Wendy Scardino**, of National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium.

Ball



Kluesner



Rodrigues



Kehde



Kapelke



Hartig



Pfohl



Kemp



Sindberg



Ruden



Schaefer



Conlon



Waelchli



Witthoeft



Chapin

## UNITYPOINT HEALTH-FINLEY HOSPITAL, OF DUBUQUE

**ANNOUNCED:** The following members and leadership changes to its board of directors: Board chair: **Dustin Farber**, of Naylor Companies; vice chair: **Poppy Conlon**, of Conlon Construction; secretary/treasurer: **Creed Waelchli**, of Cottingham & Butler.Also elected to the board were: **Dr. Laura Witthoeft**, of Dubuque OB/GYN; **Andi Even**, CFO of Kunkel & Associates Inc.; **Maureen Quann**, director of quality and compliance management and corporate counsel of Cottingham & Butler; **Matt Scherr**, president of Dubuque Screw Products, Inc.

The hospital also announced the fol-

lowing additions to the Visiting Nurse Association Board of Directors: **Kari Lammer**, as board chair, and **Shea Chapin**, assistant professor of Law at University of Dubuque.

## THE DUBUQUE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**ANNOUNCED:** New board officers for 2023: Chair: **Tom Woodward**, president and CEO of Woodward Communications Inc.; vice chair: **Jim Gantz**, retired from Lime-Rock Springs/Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co.; secretary: **Francis A. Murray**, president and CEO of First Community Trust, N.A. Investment Services (retired); treasurer: **Sarah Hasken**, community leader; past

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Story suggestion? Want to write for biztimes.biz? Email [tony.frenzel@thmedia.com](mailto:tony.frenzel@thmedia.com) and [megan.gloss@thmedia.com](mailto:megan.gloss@thmedia.com)



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Doyle



Johnson



Erdenberger



Welter



Stoll



Oberbroeckling



Slaght



Reuter

Continued from page 34

chair: **Lori Thielen**, CFO of Rainbow Oil.

## DUBUQUE CITY COUNCIL

**ANNOUNCED:** Susan Farber has been appointed to the National League of Cities 2023 Information Technology and Communications federal advocacy committee. In this role, she will provide strategic direction and guidance for committee's federal advocacy agenda and policy priorities on broadband infrastructure, digital equity, cybersecurity and related topics.

## ORIGIN DESIGN

**HIRED:** Jackson Doyle joined the company as a field services technician/engineering designer.

## APPLE RIVER STATE BANK

**PROMOTED:** Mandy Johnson as branch manager of the new Darlington, Wis., office and **Crystal Erdenberger** as assistant branch manager of the Scales Mound, Ill., office.

## MCGRAW HILL

**PROMOTED:** Christina Welter to customer success specialist.

**PROMOTED:** Missy Stoll to account manager.

**PROMOTED:** Jay Oberbroeckling to director of customer success and sales platform operations.

**PROMOTED:** Casey Slaght to district sales manager.

**PROMOTED:** Katie Reuter to product developer.

## SOUTHWEST HEALTH

**HIRED:** Dayton Opel as a hand specialist orthopedic surgeon.

**HIRED:** James Prosser as a sports medicine orthopedic surgeon.

## PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL

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## STEEPLE SQUARE

**ANNOUNCED:** The following were elected to its executive board: **Judy Wolf** as president, **Terry Friedman** as vice president, **Bret Tuley** as secretary, **Janet Quick** as treasurer, **John Schmidt** as past president. **John Gronen**, **Nicole Gantz**, **Nancy Kann**, **John Dunkel**, **Brendan Quann** and **Rick Runde** as committee chairs.

The nonprofit also elected new board members: **Pat McCullough**, president of McCullough Creative Inc.; **Krista Weitz**, program developer for Northeast Iowa Community College.

**ACHIEVEMENT:** Dick Gregory and John Schmidt were awarded with the Sister Helen Huewe Service Awards. **Mary Ann Konzett** and **Ron Wolf** were awarded with the Volunteers of the Year Awards.

## BODINE ELECTRIC CO.

**HIRED:** Dawn Tully as a flexible em-

ployee in the assembly department.

**HIRED:** Aysia Carstairs as a flexible employee in the shaft department.

**HIRED:** Tanner Donahue as a buyer.

**PROMOTED:** Nicole Breiner to set up and operate B in the shaft department.

**PROMOTED:** Tom Otting and Dan Bonert to team leaders in the structural department.

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# What the FTC's noncompete agreement ban could mean for you

BY ELLA CERON AND JO CONSTANZ

Noncompete agreements bar about 30 million American workers from quitting their jobs to work for rival companies or start their own businesses, a practice that the Federal Trade Commission calls exploitative and wants to ban.

The arrangements, which critics say can hold down wages and hinder innovation, are especially common in industries like manufacturing, technology and health care, where as many as 45% of primary care physicians are bound by the agreements. While the rationale for these clauses is often to protect intellectual property, they can restrict low-wage workers like food service employees and security guards from seeking a similar job in the same field.

## WHAT IS A NONCOMPETE AGREEMENT AND WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

The contracts vary in scope and duration, but typically bar employees from working at a competitor or starting a company in the same field as their current employer based on time, industry or geographic constraints, the National Employment Law Project notes.

Two reasons companies commonly give for noncompete agreements are to protect trade secrets or client relationships and to incentivize employers to train workers by assuring they won't take that knowledge to a rival.

They can protect companies with intellectual property or time-sensitive innovation assets, said Emily M. Dickens, the chief of staff and head of public affairs at Society for

Human Resource Management. But a crack-down by the FTC could isolate those cases while still allowing greater mobility for other workers.

"There are jobs we know right now that are requiring them where it's not necessary, and in that case, this could help stop that issue," she said.

## WHY IS THE FTC TRYING TO BAN MOST NONCOMPETE AGREEMENTS?

The FTC says noncompete agreements block people from higher pay and better conditions, given that workers typically land higher wages when they switch jobs. According to a report by the agency, these contracts and other anti-competitive practices, like pay secrecy, suppress wages by about 20%.

Banning noncompete agreements means that employers would be forced to find positive ways to retain workers rather than punitive ones, said Denise Rousseau, a professor of organizational behavior and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University. These can include boosting pay and investing in workers' skill development.

## WHAT IF YOU LIVE IN A STATE THAT ALREADY MAKES NONCOMPETE AGREEMENTS UNENFORCEABLE?

Some states, including California, North Dakota and Oklahoma have legislation that makes noncompete agreements unenforceable. Oregon, Illinois, Washington and others limit their use among low-wage workers.

Even so, workers might have signed contracts in those states anyway.

"People are given a big packet on their first day of work — in many cases, when they have already accepted a job and turned down other job offers — and it says, you can't keep this job unless you sign these things," said Heidi Shierholz, the president of the Economic Policy Institute.

Signed or not, these contracts can deter employees from switching jobs even where they're not enforceable. The proposed FTC rule would also require employers with existing agreements to inform employees that the contracts are being dissolved.



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## WOULD A NONCOMPETE AGREEMENT BAN REALLY HELP YOU MAKE MORE MONEY?

An analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta found that people who switched jobs from July 2021 through July 2022 saw their wage increase by 6.7%, two percentage points higher than those who stayed in their jobs.

Banning non-competes also incentivizes companies to boost pay to attract and retain workers. When Hawaii banned the contracts for tech workers in 2015, new hires saw a salary boost of about 4%. That would translate to a raise of about \$4,400 for a software engineer earning the state's average salary of \$110,775 for that industry.

Shierholz with the EPI cited existing evidence that some high-paid workers like doctors and lawyers might be able to negotiate higher wages as a result of signing a noncompete agreement ahead of accepting a job — but they're the exception, not the rule.

"That is not the typical person who signs a noncompete agreement," she said. Overall, signing a noncompete is "a sign of having very little power and having what little power you have taken away," she said.

## WHO STANDS TO BENEFIT THE MOST FROM A NONCOMPETE AGREEMENT BAN?

Low-wage workers, who often don't have much bargaining power to begin with, would likely benefit the most in the form of higher pay, more employment options and mobility.

Proponents of the new rule argue it can be good for businesses, too: It could free some entrepreneurs to start new companies and make it easier for employers to hire.

## COULD EMPLOYERS MAKE YOU SIGN SOMETHING ELSE?

Depending on the state, employers might ask for a nondisclosure agreement or some other contract that limits how much information workers can share with future jobs. Several states have banned nondisclosures related to workplace discrimination. Other employers might retain ownership rights to intellectual property.

Rousseau at Carnegie Mellon said that if employers can find alternative methods to protect trade knowledge and affirm workers, they may be more likely to retain employees.

"Can you do in a way that is respectful and appreciative to employees, and not viewing them like the enemy?" she said.

*Ceron and Constanz write for Bloomberg News.*

## SUCCESSOR NAMED FOR MI-T-M CORP. PRESIDENT

Mi-T-M Corp. recently announced that its longtime president will retire this spring and the company's board of directors named his successor.



Humphrey

**Sam Humphrey** will retire June 1 after 32 years with the company and 27 years as president, according to a press release. He will remain on the company board of directors until his term expires.



Stanley

"Humphrey has played an instrumental role at Mi-T-M and has helped guide the company through many milestones, including new equipment introductions, numerous business partnerships, an over-1-million-square-foot facility expansion, customer growth and becoming an employee-owned company," the release states.

Humphrey in the release said he was "deeply honored" to have been able to lead the company and that Mi-T-M "is well-positioned to grow and thrive in the years to come."

The company board of directors selected **Rick Stanley** to succeed Humphrey and serve as president and CEO.

## Executive Moves 39

"Stanley is a talented and seasoned leader and has held many executive positions with large national companies, including Liberty Diversified International, Flexsteel, Brunswick and Whirlpool," the release states. "He has 28 years of corporate management experience and will work side by side with Humphrey until June."

## STONEHILL PRESIDENT AND CEO TO RETIRE

The president and CEO of Stonehill Communities has announced her retirement.

**Gretchen Brown** will retire from her role effective Aug. 10, according to a press release. Her retirement comes after eight years of service.

"During her tenure, Stonehill has seen continual strategic growth including a number of capital projects, including the renovation

of the health center resident care areas and chapel, expansion of Assisi Village to include assisted living memory care and the new administrative/outreach building which houses the Caregiver Resource Center," the release states.

Brown will continue to be part of Stonehill following her retirement to help with the CEO transition, the release states. The Stonehill Board of Directors has started a search for a successor.



Brown



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# Employers are essential to building Dubuque's Community Equity Profile



**MARY JO  
JEAN-  
FRANCOIS**  
Community  
Foundation  
of Greater  
Dubuque.

She is vice president  
of impact at the  
Dubuque institution

In January, my colleagues and I had the pleasure of visiting John Deere Dubuque Works for an open and honest discussion about health and wellness in our community. About 25 employees had gathered in a safe, nonjudgmental space to share their experiences with access to services, resources and amenities in Dubuque.

This was one of 22 community conversations we at the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque have hosted since September that will help us create Dubuque's Community Equity Profile. Many of these conversations are open to the public, while others, like the one at John Deere, are hosted by local organizations with the goal of better understanding how their employees' lives are shaped by systems like health care, education and housing.

Companies like John Deere understand that their workers' satisfaction in their jobs is tied to their satisfaction in the community where they live — and vice-versa. Those who feel welcome and included in their workplace and community, and can access services that enable them to thrive, are more likely to stay.

Employers have been key partners in creating the Community Equity Profile since we published the first one in 2015. John Deere is just one that has volunteered to host conversations for employees. Others have included the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium and Northeast Iowa Community College. In addition, organizations like Cottingham & Butler, the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, Greater Dubuque Development Corp., Green State Credit Union and Hodge Company have sponsored panel discussions that provide background data and an overview of each Equity Profile topic. John Deere and NICC also have sponsored panel discussions.

Since the first Equity Profile was published nearly eight years ago, it has served as an important tool for employers, civic leaders and others to understand what's working in Dubuque and where there are opportunities to strengthen the systems that serve everyone who lives and works here. The updated Equity Profile, which will be published in May, will shed light on community issues, assets and opportunities that exist today.

Employers interested in hosting conversations for their teams might consider looking to John Deere for

inspiration. The conversation I attended on its campus stood out for a few reasons.

First, the level of engagement was impressive. It was clear that leaders worked hard to ensure employees from all departments and of different experience levels knew about the opportunity.

Second, those in attendance seemed to feel comfortable and shared thoughtful comments about their experiences accessing health care in the area. Creating opportunities where employees can feel like they have been seen and heard is essential to gathering meaningful input.

Finally, the crowd was diverse, comprising a range of employee demographics. This is important because, in order for the Equity Profile to be effective, it needs input from voices that represent the many different communities of Dubuque. It also creates an opportunity to hear how employers can better serve the needs of their team and families.

We are grateful to John Deere team members Danielle Moore and Abhay Rawal, who also serve on the Community Foundation's Board of Directors, as well as Anderson Sainci in the City of Dubuque's Office of Shared Prosperity and Neighborhood Support for helping organize the conversation.

John Deere leaders have long understood that focusing on diversity and inclusion is good for their workers, good for the organization and good for the community. Beyond the Equity Profile, they have stayed engaged with the Foundation initiatives to foster welcoming, inclusive workplaces and communities, such as our Business Leader Equity Cohort and Employer Inclusion Council. Many other employers who have taken part in the Equity Profile process also have engaged with these initiatives.

There's still time to host conversations for your organization's employees. March will focus on safe neighborhoods, and April will be about issues related to transportation.

If you'd like to get involved, call 563-588-2700, or [dbq-foundation.org/equityprofile](http://dbq-foundation.org/equityprofile).

This is a chance to learn more about your workforce while helping build a Dubuque region where everyone has access to resources and opportunities that enable them to thrive.

## MARYJO SAYS

Companies like John Deere understand that their workers' satisfaction in their jobs is tied to their satisfaction in the community where they live — and vice-versa. Those who feel welcome and included in their workplace and community, and can access services that enable them to thrive, are more likely to stay.



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# Grieving guard finds solace amid art at the Met

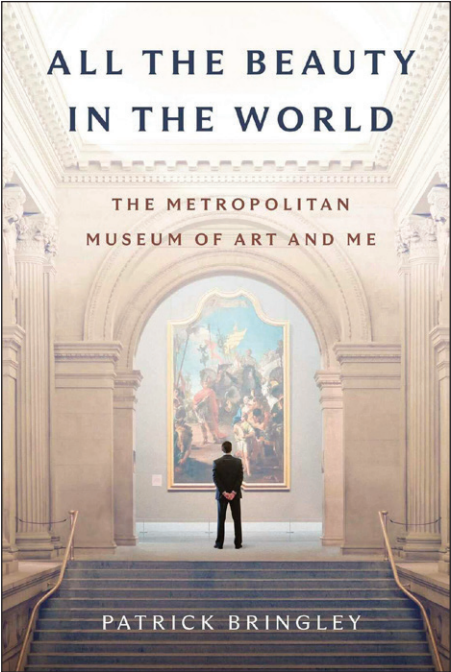
**When Patrick Bringley's older brother died, it upended his life**  
BY ANN LEVIN  
*"All the Beauty in the World," by Patrick Bringley (Simon & Schuster)*

When his older brother died of cancer at age 26, Patrick Bringley's life was upended. Not even two years younger, Bringley quit his "high-flying desk job" at the New Yorker magazine and in a profound act of mourning, went to work as a guard at the Metropolitan Museum — "the most straight-forward job I could think of in the most beautiful place I knew." Yes, a guard. Proud member of DC 37 Local 1503. Bringley, who had fond memories of his first trip to the Met at age 11, back when visitors still wore brightly colored tin admission pins, ended up staying 10 years, long enough for the museum to work its magic and bring him back from the brink.

His reflections on that decade form the spine of his hauntingly beautiful memoir, "All the Beauty in the World." Elegant in its simplicity and dedicated to his brother, Tom, Bringley explores the way that great works of art can function as a balm for the soul, not unlike the immersive experience of travel to a foreign land.

"You dissolve almost ... You walk the streets alive to the exotic details, but even an ordinary pigeon flapping its wings is oddly vivid. There is a poetry about it, and as long as you glide through watchfully, the spell won't break."

In front of Vermeer's "Maid Asleep," he



Contributed

perceives "a grandeur and holiness" in its intimate setting. Standing amid what one visitor calls the "Jesus pictures," he is transfixed by a 14th century crucifixion, using it as "a kind of machine to aid in necessary and painful reflection" about suffering. As time goes by, his discovers that his broken heart has started to heal.

In some respects, Bringley's debut is a classic workplace memoir, filled with stories about the Met's collections, his fellow guards and some of the millions of visitors

"You dissolve almost ... You walk the streets alive to the exotic details, but even an ordinary pigeon flapping its wings is oddly vivid. There is a poetry about it, and as long as you glide through watchfully, the spell won't break."

who have traipsed up the institution's iconic stone steps overlooking 82nd Street and Fifth Avenue. Most of his insider stories are sweet and funny, including the tidbit that guards back in 2008 received an \$80 annual "hose allowance" for socks.

But Bringley's primary interest is in the miracle of art, whether painting, sculpture or his own vocation, writing. His intuition that the Met — a place of "soundless beauty" — would be a better place than a trendy magazine to pursue his craft turned out to be right.

The humble union job gave him the time and space he needed to produce a work of art as luminous as the old masters paintings that comforted him in his grief.

Levin writes for The Associated Press.

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