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Summer 2024
FREE



Springfield's best ukulele band

Fun and music with The LeiAbouts

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Wild Rose grows downtown

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Honor Guard offers final tribute for fallen nurses

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Doug Knight, always learning

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The Dubuque Arboretum and Botanical Gardens in Dubuque, Iowa. P. 8.
PHOTO BY BRENT BOHLEN

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ReGeneration Summer 2024

Each season in this space we continue to define *ReGeneration*, the generation we write for. They're 50-plus, but not defined by age, and in the second half of life, but far from finished. We of the *ReGeneration* are active because we're strong, healthy because we care about health, experienced because we've been around a time or two, interesting because we're interested in a lot of things.

We could go on, but you get the idea. This magazine gathers articles to interest elders who are redefining the term. In this edition we feature The LeiAbouts, p. 18, Springfield's best (and only) ukelele band, talented players who spread fun with their music and don't charge for it. The Nurse Honor Guard, p. 16, pays a final tribute to nurses who have lived a life of caring for others. Take a nature walk for tranquility, p. 12, and a trip to Dubuque, p. 8, or shop at Wild Rose downtown, p. 5, a store that is more than a store.

We hope you like this edition, and tell your friends about it. And tell our advertisers how much you appreciate their support of *REGEN*. See you again in the fall. —*Fletcher Farrar, editor*

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Wild Rose, at 115 N. Sixth St., is across from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

A Wild Rose grows downtown

A store, a gallery and a community center, bringing people together

By Nell Clay

Wild Rose Artisans Gallery and Boutique celebrates the talents of local artisans as they pour their hearts into creating their masterpieces. The store is at 115 North Sixth St., in downtown Springfield, just across from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. There you are invited to a shopping experience that embraces creativity and supports gifted artisans.

When entering the store, you feel and see creativity. Products include vintage clothing, original artwork, prints, pottery, a variety of purses, cute stuffed animals, beautiful stained glass, mugs, coasters, stationery, wood crafted items, pottery, home goods, skin care products, several types of handcrafted jewelry, and gift items for males, females and children. There is only one artisan allowed per type of product. Wild Rose promotes

and highlights an artisan each month on various social media platforms.

Diverse cultures are represented by the artisans currently showcasing their creations at the Wild Rose Artisans Gallery and Boutique. They include Mexican, Korean, Chilean and American.

Monica Zanetti moved to Springfield from Alameda, California, with her family. While growing up in Alameda, she developed a love for the many bazaars and various marketplaces that showcased the work of various artisans. She began creating artwork while in college, but family and work temporarily took her away from the craft she loved. Eventually she began painting and selling her vibrant, colorful artistic compositions.

Monica is a multitasking individual who wears many hats. As a devoted mother, activist and artist, Monica's

mission is to inspire others through her art. She has proudly called Springfield her home for the past six years.

In the fall of 2019, Monica realized a lifelong dream when she became the owner of Wild Rose, a renowned art studio turned retail shop in Springfield. This venture has not only provided a platform for over 20 local artists to showcase and sell their work but has also allowed Monica to support the arts and her community in new ways. Monica loves partnering with other small businesses and actively gives back to the community that has embraced her.

Monica expresses her community commitment by hosting fundraisers, donating to various nonprofit organizations and sponsoring various events. Adjacent to Wild Rose is a community room where Monica has



Monica Zanetti, center, hosted a Hispanic Heritage Celebration in 2023. Sen. Doris Turner is at left with Guitarist Gabriel, whose daughter is at right.

hosted art classes, sound bowl classes, spoken word events and Mexican heritage celebrations that showcase her Hispanic heritage. A terrarium workshop was held there, where participants designed their own terrarium. This space is available to organizations and individuals to use for classes or events.

“This is an amazing shop,” says one of her devoted clients. “The owner is very personable and works hard. Monica is dedicated to her community and is willing to work with all who want to thrive in a creative environment.”

Monica’s accolades include the Susana Mendoza Award for Hispanic Heritage Month. Mendoza, the state comptroller, wrote: “Your commitment and dedication to your work have earned you both respect and success and have created tangible, meaningful contributions to your community. Your devotion to the development of opportunities and growth for future generations makes you a shining example for all to emulate.”

Approachable, friendly, and eager to collaborate, Monica constantly explores new opportunities and connections. Don’t hesitate to reach out and share your thoughts with her – she will be delighted to hear from you.

Monica’s artistic journey has seen her work featured in prestigious locations, including San Francisco’s historic City Hall, the National Museum of Mexican Art Gift Shop, Sacred Art and her very own shop in Springfield. Beyond her artistic endeavors, Monica also serves as a member of the board of directors for Memorial Foundation, Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois and Downtown Springfield Inc., tirelessly working to make a positive impact on her community.

Passionate about showcasing her Latin culture, Monica infuses her store and the community with its vibrant essence. Recently, she brought the joyous melodies of a mariachi singer to Springfield’s Summer Levitt AMP Concert Series, spreading cultural richness and delight to all who attended.

Shopping at Wild Rose Artisans Gallery and Boutique is an experience like none other. It is exciting to explore a store



The store is open 10-5:30 Monday to Friday and 10-5 on Saturday.

with so many hand-crafted items that cannot be found in a chain department store. The eclectic styles showcase a broad range of diverse offerings. Shopping at Wild Rose not only provides an opportunity to purchase a one-of-a-kind item but supports local artisans in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

If you have the entrepreneurial spirit, and would love to work with Monica, she can be contacted by phone at 217-672-1884, or by email at wildroseartisans@gmail.com, Facebook – Wild Rose Artisans Gallery and Boutique, Instagram, TikTok, website – wildroseartisans.com. The store hours are 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. M-F and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturday. Special event times vary. Please check the Wild Rose webpage for all scheduled events. □

Nell Clay, originally from Chicago, has resided in Springfield for over 40 years. She is also an artisan who loves the creative process and makes handcrafted jewelry, coasters, handpainted vases and artwork.



Monica Zanetti hosts a Vision Board workshop for Women Entrepreneurs of Central Illinois at Wild Rose. Debbie Ringer, treasurer of the group, is at right.



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Dubuque, a must-see can't-miss destination

History, scenery, museums, aquaria await on the other side of the Mississippi

By Mary Bohlen

Something fishy is going on in Dubuque.

Big fish, small fish, red fish, blue fish, ocean fish and river fish are swimming around at the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium. It is just one of the must-see attractions in this eastern Iowa river town, about 3½ hours north of Springfield.

Others include an historic downtown, riverboats, outdoor sculptures, an impressive botanical garden and a famous baseball field nearby. You can view the Mississippi from atop limestone bluffs and the journey up is half the fun if you opt for a ride on the 1882-era Fenelon Place elevator.

Dubuque is Iowa's oldest community, named for the French-Canadian trader Julien Dubuque, who first settled the area. Chartered in 1837, the city maintains several landmarks reflecting its long history. Visitors can view an 1856 tower where workers produced lead shot for the military, an 1873 town clock weighing 13 tons and the 1839 Hotel Julien Dubuque, an opulent place for meals or stays.

That elevator to the top of a bluff is a thrill. Old wooden cars clank slowly up and down a steep track, from April through November, for the roundtrip rate of \$4 for adults. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the short scenic railway served a wealthy banker who lived on top of the bluffs and worked at the bottom. He liked to take a half-hour nap after lunch but found the long buggy ride back and forth prohibited it.

More modern sites sit along the Mississippi, including the museum



The river otters exhibit is a favorite at the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque, Iowa. PHOTO BY KELLI SHRPA

and aquarium devoted to marine life. The attraction's campus spans 14 acres at the Port of Dubuque and has two main buildings and numerous outdoor displays.

"It is Smithsonian-affiliated and that is a testament to the quality and caliber of the museum," says Taylor Kellogg, vice president of marketing for Travel Dubuque. "It is unique in that it covers the Mississippi from its headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico."

Interactive displays in one building feature local and regional river life while the other building spans the entire

Mississippi. The Rivers to the Sea aquaria include sea horses, stingrays and a giant octopus. Several exhibits explain the history of life on the river.

In between the two main buildings, visitors can explore a boat shop and a machine shop. Outdoors are a log cabin, a boat launch and a blacksmith shop. Sitting on the water is the William M. Black dredge boat, worth an inspection.

If you prefer to get out on the water, you can book a lunch or an all-day cruise or opt for a longer ride with Dubuque as one of the stops. Some days you can spot a major river cruise line disembarking

passengers for a day in the city.

Nearby along the flood wall is the River Walk with the city's convention center, a resort with indoor water park, a winery and a collection of sculptures. Kellogg says the public "Art on the River" is a juried display of sculpture that changes every year.

She also recommends getting a map at the downtown visitors center to view the more than 50 murals painted by local and national artists, with most of the murals in the Main Street District. For art indoors, visit the downtown Dubuque Museum of Art, which is also Smithsonian-affiliated and emphasizes 20th-century American art.

On summer Saturdays from 7 a.m. to noon, you can pick up produce and other goods at Iowa's oldest farmers market, first held in 1845. The market, with up to 120 vendors, centers around City Hall. In a nearby old warehouse district, you can shop at the similar Millwork Night Market on the second Thursday of the month from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.



The Dubuque Arboretum and Botanical Gardens sit high above the city and may be the largest volunteer-run botanical gardens in the United States.
PHOTO BY BRENT BOHLEN

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The National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium features displays on local and regional river life and traces the Mississippi from its headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico. PHOTO BY MARY BOHLEN

High above downtown, head west to the free Dubuque Arboretum and Botanical Gardens, which may be the largest volunteer-run botanical garden in the country. It was established in 1980 and encompasses 56 acres filled with perennials, annuals, cacti, wildflowers, hostas, roses and herbs.

A tall-grass prairie tries to recreate Midwestern land before it was developed, and a Japanese garden and pond create a reflective spot. Children's gardens, waterfalls and hiking trails add to the experience. Kellogg says a family-focused area should open in 2025 with attractions for children, including treehouses.

The Mines of Spain State Recreation Area is on a bluff south of town and contains the Julien Dubuque burial space and monument. A short, cement, ADA-accessible trail takes you to the single tall tower of limestone that affords views of Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois, according to Kellogg.

Baseball buffs will want to include a



"Ghost players" emerge from a cornfield at the Field of Dreams movie site near Dyersville, Iowa. A popular tourist stop in eastern Iowa, the field will host Ghost Saturdays on July 1 and 22, August 5 and 26 and September 30 this year. PHOTO COURTESY OF TRAVEL DUBUQUE

pilgrimage to the *Field of Dreams* movie, set outside Dyersville, 25 miles north of Dubuque. If you go on July 1 or 22, Aug. 5 or 26 or Sept. 30, you can watch “ghost” players emerge from the fields surrounding the ballfield. Shows are free and start at 1 p.m. except for the 7 p.m. game on Aug. 26. Even if you don’t make it to one of the shows, you can enjoy the field and a farmhouse tour.

Kellogg notes that many first-time visitors have been to historic Galena, Illinois, just 16 miles southeast, and are surprised to find all that Dubuque has to offer. “I get that all the time,” she explains, when people tell her they didn’t realize how interesting Dubuque can be. “Everything here is a can’t-miss.”

For more information about all things Dubuque, go to www.traveldubuque.com. □

Mary Bohlen, a Springfield travel writer, admits she was one of those Galena visitors who didn’t realize Dubuque is a can’t-miss destination.



The historic Fenelon Place elevator is open from April to November in Dubuque, and affords a view of downtown and the Mississippi River. The short scenic railway dates to 1882 and first served a wealthy banker who wanted to avoid a long buggy ride from his home on top of a bluff to his office downtown.

PHOTO BY MARY BOHLEN

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Take a nature walk. **Revive** your spirit.

Step off the pavement into woodlands, wetlands, prairies and peace.

By DiAnne Crown

Two area walking paths offer gentle exercise, natural beauty and the gift of quiet reflection. Visit Jubilee Farm and Lincoln Memorial Garden for re-creation and peace.

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Your second visit to Jubilee Farm will be more predictable. The pond and labyrinth are this way, the woods are that way, Creative Arts Center, the prairie ... and so forth. But the first visit is an experience of wonder and discovery. Every vista offers beauty, every breath calms. Watch the sky change. See what's growing in the organic gardens. Visit with the alpacas and llama. And, above all, listen. The air is filled with countless songs and calls of nesting and migrating birds. Settle into the serenity, and then take a walk.

Sister Sharon Zayac, the Dominican Sisters, and a team of staff and volunteers care for the land, flora and fauna. "We think of Jubilee Farm as a sanctuary, certainly for wildlife and the migrating birds who travel between Central and South America, and Canada, and stop here to rest," says Zayac. Foxes, deer, coyotes, ducks, geese, frogs, turtles, and more species, all make their homes in the wetland, prairie and woods of the 164 acres. Visitors will likely see some of the nature community residents on



One of many benches inviting rest and relaxation at Jubilee Farm.

PHOTO CREDIT, JUBILEE FARM.

the miles of mowed and mulched trails. Benches along the way offer stops for rest, reflection and birdwatching.

Summer views include blooming native plants, and many butterfly and bird pollinators. The stewardship of the farm includes eliminating invasive species, converting lawns to permaculture prairie and gardens, and helping the land restore itself, says Zayac. The vision statement of the farm affirms this goal. "Jubilee Farm seeks to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the Earth community and to share the gift of the land. Our diverse ministries call us all to live simply and sustainably."

"We encourage visitors to go off on

a 'soundscape,'" Zayac says. "Turn off technology, don't speak to each other, just listen for the sounds of nature and be moved. It's one of the things visitors most remember, including children."

Springfield resident Grace Norris began visiting and volunteering at Jubilee Farm several years ago and regularly walks the trails and labyrinth. "It's everything you want. There are prairie, wetland and woodland habitats, with well-manicured trails. Walking the trails brings me closer to the Lord, and there's a side benefit of getting exercise in a quiet, peaceful, beautiful place. It's a safe place even for a woman alone."

To enjoy the peace and energy of the

land at Jubilee Farm, drive west from Springfield on Old Jacksonville Road. The entrance is marked with a sign on the south side of the road just about four miles out. Please call to confirm open hours the day of your visit, and stop in at the office when you arrive.

Lincoln Memorial Garden and Nature Center

2301 East Lake Shore Drive, Springfield
www.lincolnmemorialgarden.org
Free to visit. The Garden is open dawn to dusk. Visit the web for Tuesday through Sunday Nature Center and Gift Shop hours. Map available online.
217-529-1111

The 100 acres of woodlands and prairies of Lincoln Memorial Garden welcome visitors to stroll tended paths, enjoy seasonal changes of the native plants and trees, watch Lake Springfield lap the bank of the garden, and see resident and visiting birds feeding and flying overhead in a landscape as Abraham Lincoln would have known it. Gardener Marissa Jones describes what's old, and what's new, in the garden.

The trails

"We have approximately six miles of trails," Jones begins. "There are two areas of the garden with trails – the main woodland area, which includes the historic, original 63 acres of Lincoln Memorial Garden's native trees and plants, and 25 acres of tall grass prairie. The woodland trails are wood-chipped or grass. Trails in the Ostermeier Prairie Center feature gravel paths that wind through restored native prairie." Visitors are welcome to use the separate parking lot when visiting the Ostermeier Prairie Center but it is accessible by trail through the historic woodland.

"One special trail," says Jones, "is our Accessibility Trail – a 150-yard, tranquil pathway through the historic garden's woodlands. A wheelchair is available to visitors if needed." Along the path, the new Children's Storywalk partnership with Lincoln Library highlights key themes of nature, women in STEM, and climate change.



Seeger (llama) and Corbe (alpaca), enjoying life at Jubilee Farm.
PHOTO CREDIT, DIANNE CROWN

What you'll see in the summer

Wildlife is an attraction in the summer. "Early June through July, you'll likely see deer fawns running through the garden (Please don't disturb or feed.), litters of raccoons peering out from dead tree nooks, and birds in residence, including eagles."

One of the most pleasing aspects of the historic garden is architect Jen Jensen's curvilinear design. Without straight lines and corners along garden trails planted with trees and native plants from Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky where Lincoln resided, Jensen created a little mystery around every bend. Look for stately oak trees, maples and hawthorns, which were some of Jensen's favorites, as well as purple coneflowers, Joe Pye weed, and spiderwort.

The hardscape

Returning visitors to the garden will see familiar historic council rings, more than 75 now refurbished benches, and

restored bridges. But this summer, visitors will also enjoy the new Children's Woodland Garden. "It's an immersive playscape," says Jones, "which encourages children's involvement in nature through educational play." When complete, the playscape will feature climbing structures made of natural materials, a simulated stream, water log tunnel, a third garden troll, and a canopy and deck for shaded viewing.

Short visit or longer stay?

Yes! Whether it's for a noon-hour break or a quiet, early-morning hike, rejuvenating exercise, or creative inspiration, "Come out and enjoy the serene beauty the garden has to offer," says Jones. "There is something here for everyone." □

DiAnne Crown has watched nesting and migrating birds here and near almost as long as she has contributed to Illinois Times – 36 years and counting.

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Honor Guard offers final tribute for fallen nurses

In a moving ceremony, a deceased nurse is “relieved of her duties” by her peers

By Nicole Florence

A white rose lays upon a casket as the Nightingale tribute for a fallen nurse is recited. After three unanswered calls for duty, the fallen nurse can be laid to rest and released of her earthly duties.

Honoring a loved one at death, and the impact left behind, can be daunting for families. For some, their profession may have been more than just a career, but a lifelong purpose. Nursing is such a profession. Nurses dedicate their lives to caring for others in their time of pain and vulnerability, as well as in moments of joy. During a career, a nurse may have touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of patients and their families. These are lives touched, not just in a clinical role, but also as advocates, counselors and confidants. So a family may want a special way to honor them at their funeral or celebration of life. Recognizing this, Melanie Reynolds an advance nurse practitioner at Memorial Health System, organized the Central Illinois Nursing Honor Guard to serve these moments.

Reynolds had considered organizing a local chapter of the Nurse Honor Guard for quite some time after seeing the impact the national organization had made on nurses fallen during and after the pandemic. The organization offers a moving and free of charge ceremony to honor registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and advance nurse practitioners who will no longer answer the call for duty. There are similar practices for the fallen of the military and first responders. It was during the pandemic, however, that many people realized the acts of service, as well as the risks nurses take



Dianne Hacker leads the nurse's prayer as (left to right) Melanie Reynolds, Kelly Jones, Kelsey Maddox and Ellen Carpenter bow their heads in reverence.

PHOTOS BY MARIA ANSLEY

in the care of others. “For many, a nurse may be present for the very first and last breath,” Reynolds explained. “A purposeful life should be honored in a unique way.”

Melanie, who has 27 years of nursing experience, learned from her nurse mother, Ginny Long. Melanie recalls bringing the kids in the neighborhood to her home as Ginny would have the supplies and experience to clean and bandage any injury. Ginny, herself a graduate of St. John's School of Nursing in 1968, has 56 years of service. Melanie learned firsthand the impact a nurse can make by watching her mother's caring for others, as well as the physical, mental and spiritual exhaustion that can occur during a career. Yet, it was the impact

of helping generations of families that Melanie has experienced in her own career that made it important to commemorate the impact nurses have. As her mother ages, it is something she thinks about more often. Ginny jokes that she just didn't want the Honor Guard's first local service to be in her honor. She is proud of her daughter's thoughtfulness.

One of the Central Illinois Nurse Honor Guard's initial services was for nurse Maureen Barnes, who had become a patient of Reynolds. She was a registered nurse for over 30 years. Her husband, Troy, recalls that the family was quite honored when Reynolds called. Maureen Barnes had had various nursing roles, but initially worked for a local neurosurgeon, Dr.

Lyle Wacaser. She would be called in the middle of the night to assist him in the operating room. “Maureen would answer these calls without any grumbling and never a complaint,” her husband said. She would respond willingly to serve the patient. Maureen enjoyed the hands-on care. She also felt preserving their dignity it was key.

Her celebration of life included the honor guard ceremony. This was a gift for the family at a difficult time. Troy states he was emotionally overwhelmed when his late wife was “relieved of her duties” by her peers.

As a result of Reynolds’ leadership, Sangamon County and its nine surrounding counties now have access to this volunteer group to provide a free service for any family of a deceased nurse. This service can be requested through the funeral home or directly from the organization itself. Fellow nurses of this group will provide a rite of passage ceremony to acknowledge the dedication of a life for the care of others and a blessing for a job well done. There are currently 700-plus members, comprising multigenerational and diverse nursing backgrounds. Currently there are over



Melanie Reynolds with her mother, Ginny Long, and her newly pinned daughter, Grace.

70 actively committed and providing Honor Guard services.

As the pandemic may have burned out many nurses into leaving the profession, it has also inspired a

new generation to health care. The Honor Guard has rejuvenated a sense of collegiality and created a way to support each other and the families they serve. Reynolds says it has instilled pride and a rebirth of the old traditions such as the respect and honor of the white cap and the nursing pin.

Reynolds hopes that honoring nurses at their end of life will be available to all who request as more become aware of their presence. She smiles and gets a bit choked up as she expresses the satisfaction of being able to give back to those who have given so much of themselves to others. Reynolds beams with pride as she stands not only with her mother, nurse Ginny, but also her daughter, Grace, a newly pinned RN. They are three generations in white caps, standing alongside the others, together fulfilling the purpose of nursing and the Honor Guard. □

Nicole Florence is a Springfield physician of almost 25 years. She has a new passion for writing and telling stories within our community.



Board of Directors of the CINHG (left to right) Kelly Jones, Dianne Hacker, Melanie Reynolds, Kelsey Maddox, Ellen Carpenter, Robin Wells

Springfield's best* ukulele band

Having fun playing music is magic

By Mike Kienzler



The LeiAbouts performed in May at First Church of the Brethren in Springfield. From left, Joan Stevens Thome, Deb Wakefield, Marsha Stout, Mike Kienzler, Katharine Gricevich, Ed Euler, Cindy Brewer. Not shown: Mark Suszko

PHOTO BY MARK SUSZKO

The LeiAbouts like to boast. “We’re Springfield’s best ukulele band.”

But then someone always pipes up. “Well, technically, we’re Springfield’s *only* ukulele band.”

That’s the LeiAbouts’ usual approach. Take the music seriously (mostly). But never themselves. The LeiAbouts adopted their name (pronounced layabouts) because it characterizes their approach to the music. Besides, who can resist a Hawaiian-language pun? “LeiAbouts” originated with member Mark Suszko.

The eight-member band revolves around the ukulele, the sweet-sounding, easy-to-play four-string instrument that was perfected in Hawaii and has spread around the world.

The LeiAbouts have been performing since 2016, mostly before small audiences at community and charity events. But they’ve also been featured at the former Festival of Trees and the Illinois State Fair and are regulars at the Edwards Place Fine Art Fair. It was 103 degrees in July 2023 when the LeiAbouts opened for one of the Levitt Amp Concerts. The show went on, sweat pouring from the LeiAbouts’ Hawaiian shirts.

Neither the ukulele nor the LeiAbouts are limited to Hawaiian music. LeiAbouts’ setlists take in rock, pop and country standards, but they’re unpredictable. A recent mini-concert at Springfield’s First Church of the Brethren focused on gospel Americana, but also included Marsha Stout’s haunting rendition of Foo Fighters’ “Times Like These.”

“My favorite thing to hear is: ‘I had no idea you could play that on uke,’” says

***and only**

More about the Uketopians:

facebook.com/groups/springfielduketopians. Or attend the Uketopians’ free monthly jam: Noon-2 p.m. second Saturday of each month, Stella Coffee and Tea, 1135 W. Governor St. Loaner ukes available. (Note: The Sept. 7 Uketopian jam will be at the annual music festival at Lincoln’s New Salem State Historic Site.)



Johnette Palumbo of Kamokunani Hula Halau in Bloomington-Normal joined the LeiAbouts for a show at the Levitt Amp Concert Series in July 2023. PHOTO BY 1221 PHOTOGRAPHY/LEVITT AMP

band member Mark Suszko.

There's no money in any of it. The LeiAbouts play for free ("and worth every penny" is usually the next line). The rewards are intangible.

"Playing and singing in a group has its own kind of magic when all the parts are clicking," Katharine Gricevich says. "Making music with friends is really enjoyable."

"One of the remarks we often get is, 'You people look like you're having so much fun up there,'" agrees Joan Stevens Thome.

The LeiAbouts originated via the Springfield Uketopians, an informal uke jam group that's been meeting monthly (excluding COVID) since 2013. Mary Dana Abbott, a former Springfield elementary school teacher, started the Uketopians with a couple of friends and a tiny ad in *Illinois Times*. "I just crossed my fingers that people would find us," she told a *State Journal-Register* writer in 2014.

Ten people came to the first in-person get-together at Café Moxo. Today, attendance at Uketopians jam sessions (now held at Stella Coffee & Tea, 1135 W. Governor St.) ranges between 20 and 30 players. Almost

400 people follow the Uketopians on Facebook.

Thome, who succeeded Abbott as the Uketopians' coordinator, and Ed Euler, who studied vocal performance in college, organized the LeiAbouts in 2016. "Joan and I wanted to create next-level opportunities to learn harder pieces and demonstrate the fun and unexpected sound of the instrument," Euler says.

Only two LeiAbouts, Euler and Stout, whose master's degree is in music education, have serious musical backgrounds. Cindy Brewer is typical of the rest. "I was in all the bands and choirs in school, but no musical training, and I don't know music theory," she says.

She was struggling to learn guitar ("I fell in love with a guitar piece Peter Tork did.") when her sister suggested she try ukulele. "Eventually, I discovered the Uketopians, and here we are. I still haven't learned Peter's piece."

In her younger days, Deb Wakefield "dabbled in guitar with all the other flower children," but, for the next 40 years, jobs and family got in the way of making music.

The LeiAbouts

- Cindy Brewer: The group's multi-instrumentalist – bass ukulele, harmonica, melodeon and lap steel guitar
- Katharine Gricevich: Concert* ukulele, most cheerful ukulele player ever
- Ed Euler: Soprano and baritone ukuleles; co-founder, musical director
- Marsha Stout: Concert ukulele, frequent lead singer
- Mark Suszko: Tenor ukulele and Wazoo (world's largest kazoo), frequent lead singer
- Deb Wakefield: Concert ukulele, ukulele grandma (her 12-year-old twin grandsons, Eli and Will, are Uketopians)
- Joan Stevens Thome: Co-founder, eight-string tenor ukulele
- Mike Kienzler; Banjo ukulele, dad jokes

*Common ukulele sizes, small to large: soprano, concert, tenor, baritone



Deb Wakefield, left, and Joan Stevens Thome sing at Levitt Amp Concert Series, July 2023 PHOTO BY 1221 PHOTOGRAPHY/LEVITT AMP

Wakefield bought her first ukulele (she now has eight) while still working. When she saw the 2014 *SJ-R* story, she saved it, thinking, “That sounds like fun!” Upon retirement a year later, Wakefield worked up enough nerve to attend her first Uketopian jam. “Joan greeted me. The rest is history.”

Five LeiAbouts are retirees, and six are older than 60. But none of them think of the band as a retirement project. It’s about renewal, new challenges, and most of all, good times with friends.

“All of us sound better than any of us,” Suszko says.

“If I can play the ukulele, anybody can,” Wakefield adds. “It has brought so much joy and fun to my life – along with some really good people.”

To contact the LeiAbouts
TheLeiAbouts@gmail.com □

Mike Kienzler, a former reporter and editor with the State Journal-Register, now edits SangamonLink.org, the online encyclopedia of the Sangamon County Historical Society. He has played ukulele on three continents.

The universal instrument

The ukulele originated as the machete, a small stringed instrument that traveled with Portuguese immigrants to Hawaii, where Hawaiians adapted it and King Kalakaua incorporated it into royal performances. Many top ukulele luthiers in Hawaii were (and are) of Japanese descent.

Ukulele players come in all ethnicities, abilities and musical genres, including Taylor Swift, George Harrison and uke virtuoso Jake Shimabukuro. Multibillionaire Warren Buffett plays ukulele.

Springfield’s first ukulele instructor was an African American, O. Jerome Singleton, director of the Douglass Community Center in the 1930s, when local social activities were largely segregated.



Cindy Brewer on bass ukulele PHOTO BY 1221 PHOTOGRAPHY/LEVITT AMP

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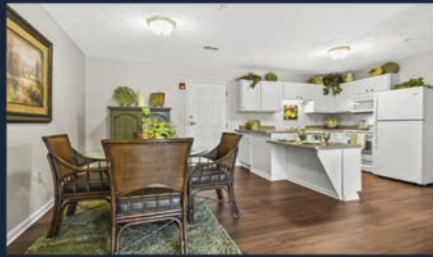
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Adaptable homes

AdaptABILITY means the home is ready to change as your needs change

By Cinda Ackerman Klickna

What if you could live in a home that is designed for a current physical health need – OR – for a need that might occur in the future? That is the premise behind Cathy Boerke’s new Springfield business, AdaptABILITY Homes. With the motto “Living Forward,” the business offers home construction, home assessments and digital monitoring systems so that more people can remain in independent living for a longer time.

With a background in real estate, senior care and construction, Boerke has partnered with builder Stephen Sgro to design and build condos that are adaptable for any ability need – at any age.

One condo, located at 1471 Dearborn Drive in Springfield’s Oak Park Estates, is currently for sale for \$399,000, with a second unit being completed. Each has three bedrooms, three baths and a two-car garage. There is a lower level for more room, especially for a family with children. A back patio, that can be enclosed, looks out on a nice yard.

“We offer a living space that provides for many different situations,” Boerke says. “So many people today want to stay in their home for as long as possible, yet physical challenges often force them to leave. We have designed the homes for anyone – for someone currently in a wheelchair, for someone who is perfectly healthy but recognizes the future may bring more challenges, and even for a young couple wanting to raise a family and then grow old in their home. One never knows the future.”

The name of the business, AdaptABILITY, is suitable, as the condo can be adapted for various abilities.



The kitchen has an open floor plan, with large space between the island and cabinets. It also includes a drop-down lower counter.

Many conventional houses have steps into the home. That alone creates problems for someone who needs a walker or a wheelchair, either now or in the future. The adaptability condo has no steps, but rather a flat surface at the entry. “That could be a feature needed for someone in a wheelchair,” Boerke says, “but one never knows what might happen. You could break a leg or have surgery and the entryway would be of help.”

On a tour of the condo, Boerke points out the already built-in items that work for anyone – toilets at comfort height, sensor lights in closets, a prewired electric car hookup in the garage, outlets placed for easier reach, rollout drawers and a drop-down lower counter in the kitchen, a ring/video doorbell, and smart technology for the

thermostat, garage door etc. All these features fit everyone’s needs, no matter their age.

Doorways are wide. The bathroom is spacious. The area between the kitchen island and cabinets is large. All these features would accommodate someone using a wheelchair or crutches.

Other items have been built into the design and can be adapted if needed. For example, a front board inside the bathroom vanity cabinet can be removed to allow for better wheelchair access. A staircase to the lower level is wide enough for a stairlift.

Part of Boerke’s interest in starting her company comes from her background. Her father was a contractor, so she was around construction growing up here in Springfield. She earned a degree in

art from Washington University in St. Louis. After she married, she lived for a time in New York and worked in the real estate industry. When she moved back to Springfield, she worked in senior care and saw many needs of seniors.

She earned certification to be an aging in place specialist through the National Association of Home Builders. Part of her business is assessing homes. “This is basically doing an inspection and pointing out things,” she says. “For instance, someone with Parkinson’s should remove rugs. Others might need to install handbars or need more lighting in an area.”

Another part of her business is working with a company called “envoy at Home” a digital monitoring system. Boerke explains, “This is not a button that someone wears and can push when needing help. It is not a camera. Instead, sensors are placed around the home and through an app a caregiver can be alerted to a problem or check on a loved one. The system learns behaviors and generates reports that



The home at 1473 Dearborn includes a stepless entry, a ring/video doorbell, and the garage is prewired for an electric car hookup. PHOTOS COURTESY ADAPTABILITY.

can be taken to the doctor.”

The “envoy at Home” literature lists situations where the sensor system proved to be important – it alerted a man’s family that he was attempting to leave the house at 4 a.m. A woman was alerted that she might have a urinary tract infection after the sensor data recognized an unusual pattern of visits to the bathroom.

Statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau show that the population of people 65 and over in 2019 was 54 million, a significant increase from 39.6 million in 2009. By 2060 that number is projected to reach 97 million. By 2030 the number of seniors is expected to surpass the number of children 13 and under.

This research and Boerke’s experience in hearing from so many who wanted to stay in their homes but were finding that impossible due to the home’s design, spurred her to start her business. She says, “I’ve been able to combine my training in art and love of design with my knowledge of construction and experience with people of all ages with health and physical needs. I’m enjoying the work so much.”

Boerke has a busy schedule and still finds time to serve on the boards of Sojourn House and the Springfield Center for Independent Living. She just assumed the presidency of the Springfield King’s Daughters Organization.

She looks forward to building more condos and helping people find a home that provides “living forward” adaptability. □

Cinda Ackerman Klickna watched her father struggle with steps and house design when he needed to use a wheelchair.



A spacious bath includes a toilet at comfort height and a vanity with easy access from a wheelchair. Right: Fireplace in a slat wall with shelving.



Doug Knight, always learning

By DiAnne Crown

Not much stands still when Doug Knight is involved. The tall, suntanned, jovial Knight lives a life that takes the energy of a marathon runner, the focus of a circus juggler, and the courage of a day trader. Springfield resident Knight co-owns and operates Knight's Action Park on the south side of Springfield, has supported the education and activities of four busy children, and maintains lifelong area friendships and community involvement. We interviewed Knight about the park and how he keeps his busy life moving forward with a smile and sense of humor.

Q – Knight's didn't start out as a 60-acre multi-attraction recreation and waterpark playground. How has it grown since 1952?

Knight – It started as a “family entertainment center.” That’s what places with batting cages, go-karts, miniature golf and a driving range were called when my grandparents and parents were getting started. We became Knight’s Recreation Park in the 1950s, moved to our present location in 1976, and built our first water slide in 1980. Shortly after, we changed the name to Knight’s Action Park, and the next big addition was children’s Seal Bay with little water slides and a relaxation pool in 1992.

Since then, we’ve added Action River, the big pirate ship, a classic 1930s Ferris wheel, wave pool, drive-in movie theaters, the Devil Ray and Royal Flush, Bermuda Triangle water slide tower, and, in 2018, the Camille’s Reef multilevel, wheelchair-accessible water playground named after my daughter. This year we’ll open the Big Surf machine. It’s going to be an amazing attraction. We’ve turned a three-flume water slide into a full-fledged water park.



Doug Knight: “We try to wow our guests with everything we do.”

PHOTO BY DIANNE CROWN

There’s always room to grow. We keep experimenting and learning all the time. A few years ago, we created Fright’s Action Park for Halloween. It is a lot of work, and we’ve had to work out some bugs, but we make it better each year. Now, I think we’re putting on a nice show with actors, costumes and features.

Q – There have been some challenges through the years, and every day is a

demanding, physical job. How do you keep going?

Knight – You just keep getting up every day and doing it. I’ve always taken pride in everything I’ve done. A lot of nights I do leave here tired and numb. But I try to keep balance in my life and find something to laugh about. There’s humor in everything if you look for it. There isn’t a single job out here I won’t do, and haven’t done, and I can service

and operate every machine in the park. But my favorite job is working with a broom and dustpan. It's satisfying, and you can learn a lot from sweeping up and watching people.

And we're always upping what we do. We attend the international amusement parks and attractions expo in Florida to see what's new, and we are always working to improve, from the landscaping and paint to every new attraction.

Q – Did this pride and discipline come from your parents?

Knight – Somewhat, yes. I grew up in the park, worked all the jobs, learned how to rebuild the engines. But I was also in Springfield's drum and bugle corps. We had to be there for practice twice a week. We traveled every weekend for parades and contests. We ate what was available, changed clothes on the bus, it was all for one and one for all. So, yes, that work ethic goes all the way back.

I admit to being a perfectionist, which can be a good thing and a terrible thing, too. But, I've been the general contractor on everything out here since 1980. I'm here every day. We try to wow our guests with everything we do, and I look at things from the guests' eyes. I try to instill that in our staff, too.

Q – Knight's Action Park is a leading employer of high school youth in the area, which you've said is important to your business and to you personally. You mentor them.

Knight – We hire about 220 high school and college youth each year. For many of them, it's their first job, so we teach them more than job skills – the importance of a good handshake, how to speak clearly, what to wear when they travel, how to write their first resumé for the dream job they've always wanted, and about respect, work ethic and attitude.

It's not an easy time for teenagers. Life's a struggle. When you can reach out to help someone get on the right path, everybody is better off. □



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EXPLORE YOUR Community

By Daron Walker

See what's happening near you

As events may be canceled or rescheduled at the last moment, please first check with the host or venue when making plans to attend an event.

ONGOING

Friday Night Jazz

Every Friday, 5:30-7:30pm. Listen to some of Springfield's finest jazz musicians with a different act every week. Sponsored by the Springfield Area Arts Council. Free, family friendly and accessible. springfieldartsco.org. Boone's, 301 Edwards St., 217-679-3752.

Lucky Horseshoes

Springfield's Prospect League team's season goes through July 31 and playoffs begin Aug. 1. See a schedule at shoesbaseball.com. Lanphier Park, 1415 North Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

The Art of Jazz

Second Thursday of every month, 7-9pm. Jazz guitarists and educators Jose Gobbo and Mark Tonelli perform together or curate an evening, booking a guest musician, a group or occasionally the UIS Jazz Band. \$10 at door. Pharmacygallery.com. Pharmacy Gallery & Art Space, 623 E. Adams St.

Carillon concerts

Through December. Master carillonneur Carlo van Ulft and local assistant carillonneurs play a variety of music from original carillon compositions to arrangements of popular classics and pop music. Enjoy the beauty

of the park and gardens with the unique accompaniment of carillon music. Visit the website or call for performance times. carillon-rees.org. Free. Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon, Washington Park, 1740 W. Fayette Ave., 217-546-3853.

Open Studio

First Friday of each month, 6-8pm. Member artists will be working in studios in the gallery. This is a great opportunity to watch them at work, ask questions and learn about their creative processes, and also view the current exhibit on display. Pharmacy Gallery & Art Space, 623 E. Adams St. pharmacygallery.com.

Illinois Products Farmers Market

Thursdays through Sept. 26, 3:30-7pm. Local meats, produce, dairy products, baked goods, honey and jams, craft beers, woodworking, jewelry and more. Plus live entertainment and a food truck. Illinois State Fairgrounds, The Shed, 801 Sangamon Ave., 217-524-9129.

Old Capitol Farmers Market

Wednesdays and Saturdays, 8am-12:30pm. Through Oct. 26. Shop for fresh local produce, baked goods and products. Sponsored by HSHS St. John's Hospital. Old Capitol Farmers Market, Fourth and Adams streets, 217-544-1723.

Moonlight Market

First and third Wednesdays through Sep. 18, 6-9pm. A wonderful way to enjoy an evening downtown. Find the works of local artists and artisans, plus dine and sip while you shop. Downtown Springfield, Jackson Street, between Sixth and Seventh streets. 217-670-0627.

5-Mile History Bike Tour

Thursdays, 1pm, from May 31 to Nov. 9. Ride your own bicycle following a guide on a casual, neighborhood-style bicycle tour of historic sites, including the Black Fire House, Dana-Thomas House, Lincoln Home, Old State Capitol, Lincoln Tomb and others. Helmets are

required and a water bottle is recommended. The 5-mile tour begins at 1pm at the Dana-Thomas House, 301 E. Lawrence Ave. 217-782-6302.

Downtown Concert Series

Every Friday through Aug. 2, 7-9pm. Each week features a different musical genre. See jacksonvillemainstreet.com for schedule of artists. Food trucks will be there, too. Downtown Jacksonville square, 217-243-5678.

Rochester Public Library Farmers Market

Every second and fourth Sunday through Sept. 22. Fresh produce, artisan crafts and baked goods, farm-raised pork products and a food truck in one location. 1 Community Drive, Rochester, 217-498-8454.

History Comes Alive

Through Aug. 4. Go back in time in this 10-week living history program. Meet the Lincolns, attend a flag-lowering ceremony, visit the local museums and historic sites and much more. Go to visitspringfieldillinois.com for a full schedule. 217-789-2360 x5520.

Artist in the Park

Fridays, noon to 1p.m., through Aug. 30. Local musicians perform in Union Square Park, 500 E. Madison St. Sponsored by the Springfield Area Arts Council. Springfieldartsco.org. Free. 217-753-3519.

Sanctuary Tours

Thursdays, 1:30-3pm. Through June 27. See the beautiful sanctuary that houses seven Tiffany windows and the pew that Abe and Mary Lincoln used during their time at the church. lincolnschurch.org. Free. First Presbyterian Church, 321 S. Seventh St., 217-528-4311.

Route 66 Main Street Mingle

First Saturday of every month, 10am-6pm. Through Oct. 5. A bustling market featuring an array of vendors such as thrift stores, unique furniture boutiques, bookshops and crystal stores, plus local eats. See the Facebook event

for more information. Virden Square, Virden, 217-965-6030.

Sangamon County Fair

June 12-16. This is a classic Midwestern county fair featuring livestock shows, queen contest, midway, music and always some top-notch entertainment. \$5-\$10. Sangamon County Fairgrounds, New Berlin, 316 W. Birch St., 217-488-2685.

Romeo & Juliet

June 13-16, 6:30pm. A tragedy by William Shakespeare about two young lovers who are unable to be together because of their rivaling families' longstanding feud. theatreinthepark.net. \$18. Theatre in the Park, Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, Petersburg, 15588 History Lane, 217-632-5440.

History Cooks: The Bunn and the Peases

June 14, 12pm. Bobb Bunn will share the story of two heritage brands now under one room. Includes tasting of chocolates by chocolatier Ashley McShane. llcc.edu. Free. Lincoln Home National Historic Site, 413 S. Eighth St., 217-786-4918.

Freeish - A Discussion on Black Citizenship in the Land of Lincoln

June 14, 12-1:15pm. "Brown bag it" and join moderator Dr. Lesa Johnson from the University of Illinois-Springfield and a distinguished group of panelists for this panel discussion of the history of Black Americans in Illinois and their fight for full American citizenship. Free. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. Sixth St., 217-558-8844.

Capital Area Concert Band

June 14, 7pm. Celebrating its 50th anniversary of sharing the joy of live music with the community, the band will perform well-known standards and newer compositions. Free. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, 212 N. Sixth St., 217-558-8844.

Masters' Back Porch Chautauqua Series

Third Sunday of every month, 2-4pm. Through Sep. 15. Listen to experts lecture on topics of local interest in literature, art and history followed by original performances by area songwriters. The Masters Memorial Museum will be open for tours the hour preceding the event. Free. 1st and 3rd Boutique and Wine Bar, Petersburg, 105 S. Seventh St.

Juneteenth Parade and celebration

June 15, 10am. Annual parade down Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to Comer Cox Park, the site of two days of celebration. Find more information and a schedule on the Juneteenth Inc. Springfield, IL Facebook page.

Morris Day and The Time

June 15, 7pm. A Juneteenth Celebration

concert. Free. Comer Cox Park, Capitol Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, 217-544-1751.

Summer Frolic

June 15, 10am-4pm. Celebrate the frontier heritage with interpreters in period clothing demonstrating period activities throughout the historic village where Lincoln once lived. Free. Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, Petersburg, 15588 History Lane, 217-632-4000.

Positively Summer Music Festival

June 16, 1-6pm. One-day music festival featuring Positively 4th Street, Ben Bedford, Chickadee Sermon and Buckhart Road. Now in its fourth year. All-ages show. Free. Long Bridge Golf Course, 1055 W. Camp Sangamo Road, 217-744-8311.

Juneteenth Freedom Day

June 19, 10:30am-2:30pm. Commemorate freedom and unity at this annual Juneteenth celebration. Honor the emancipation of enslaved individuals and celebrate the rich history and culture of African Americans. Includes games, vendors and food trucks. jacksonvilleil.org. Community Park, Jacksonville, South Main Street, 217-414-5059.

Armchair Boogie

June 20, 6-9:30pm. A night of bluegrass. Part of the Levitt AMP Springfield Music Series. Opening act TBA. Y Block, Fourth and Jackson streets, 217-544-1723.

The Music Man

June 21-22 and June 26-29. Con man Harold Hill poses as a band organizer and leader and sells band instruments and uniforms to naïve Midwestern townfolk, promising to train the members of the new band, but plans to skip town without giving any music lessons. themuni.org. \$12-\$22. Ages 5 and under free. The Muni, 815 East Lake Drive, 217-793-MUNI.

History Cooks: Susan Lawrence Dana and Her House

June 21, 12pm. Chef Michael Higgins and Kaitlin Pottier will discuss how Maldaner's Restaurant served as the caterer at some of Susan's parties. llcc.edu. Free. Lincoln Home National Historic Site, 413 S. Eighth St., 217-786-4918.

SERA Springfield Rodeo

June 21, 7:30pm. A showcase of professional cowboys and cowgirls competing in events such as bronc riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, ladies barrel racing, team roping, bull riding and junior barrel racing. serodeo.com. \$22. Illinois State Fairgrounds, 801 Sangamon Ave., 217-782-6661.

Hopeapalooza

June 22, 10am-1pm. Hopeapalooza brings together families, foodies, and exciting activities for children. There will be inflatables, a DJ, bubbles, exotic zoo, food vendors, kites, sensory friendly spaces and more. hope.us. Free. Southwind Park, 4965 S. Second St., 217-753-0702.

The Ruby Slippers

June 23, 1, 3pm. The classic *Wizard of Oz* retold by the talented Dance Arts Studio students. hcfta.org. \$15. Hoogland Center for the Arts LRS Theatre 1, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Memorial Health Championship presented by LRS

June 27-June 30, 6am-7pm. The path to the PGA Tour starts here at this stop on the Korn Ferry Tour. The four-day competition presented by LRS features more than 150 players from around the world vying for a total purse of \$1 million. Free. Panther Creek Country Club, 3001 Panther Creek Drive, 217-670-2910.

Kyshona

June 27, 6-9:30pm. An evening of soul folk. Part of the Levitt AMP Springfield Music Series. Opening act TBA. Y Block, Fourth and Jackson streets, 217-544-1723.

The Red Velvet Cake War

June 27-30, 6:30pm. The three Verdeen cousins — Gaynelle, Peaches and Jimmie Wyvette — could not have picked a worse time to throw their family reunion. The result is a classic Southern-fried comedy. theatreinthepark.net. Theatre in the Park, Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, Petersburg, 15588 History Lane, 217-632-5440.

Annual Birthday Party

June 28, 11:30am. Join fellow seniors for cake, ice cream, door prizes and entertainment by Curt Smith. centralilseniors.org. Senior Services of Central Illinois, 701 W. Mason St., 217-528-4035.

History Cooks: Baur's Restaurant

June 28, 12pm. Presentation by chef Richard Long, who was executive chef at Baur's for many years. llcc.edu. Free. Lincoln Home National Historic Site, 413 S. Eighth St., 217-786-2200.

Invincible

June 28, 7pm. "A Glorious Tribute to Michael Jackson." A multimedia spectacle featuring up to 17 musicians, vocalists and dancers, and the choreography by longtime Jackson choreographer and dancer, Lavelle Smith Jr. devonamphitheater.com. The Devon Lakeshore Amphitheater, Decatur, 620 E. Riverside Drive, 217-619-8025.

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