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

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## SPRING 2020

## FEATURE STORY



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By Kaitlin Cordes

## A man in a grey sweatshirt and khaki pants stands outdoors, talking on a red rotary telephone. He is holding the receiver to his ear with his left hand and a coiled red cord runs down to a red rotary phone mounted on his hip. He is standing next to a large metal structure with a large wheel and a yellow hose.





Gary Coffey, center, chats with, from left to right, Leonard Weishaar of Island Grove, Joe Adams of Effingham, Kay Adams of Effingham and Marylene Weishaar of Island Grove during a stop at Niemerg's Steakhouse.

Another pretend phone call made Doug Hites, Maxine Hites and Connie Tipsword of Edgewood chuckle. Doug Hites theorized that if technology hadn't evolved into the small, hand-held devices we have today, the world would be a little less scary.

"If we had stuff like this still, the world would be a lot safer," Doug Hites said.

Tipsword said she recalled having a hand-crank telephone and found it humorous to see another version of a phone she once owned.

As he made his way through the restaurant, all eyes were on Coffey and his phone. The phone also drew the attention of a large group of friends out for lunch.

As Coffey chatted with Bob Bush of North Dakota, Bob Ingram Sr. and Andy Verdeyen of Edgewood and Darrell Cress of Effingham, Dorris Cress and Shirley Ingram reflected on memories of older phones and how they compare to today's technology.

"It's definitely much bigger than a cellphone," Shirley Ingram noted.

"It's kind of too big to carry around," Dorris Cress added of the rotary phone.

Minnesota couple Mike and Barb Trinidad had similar reactions when

seeing Coffey for the first time as they awaited their order at Culver's.

"It definitely made me smile," Mike Trinidad said.

Though Coffey's shtick can usually make a stranger laugh, he said it's oftentimes harder to get a giggle out of his wife of nearly 50 years, Marylee, because she knows all of his jokes. He said at times his wife almost cringes at the site of the rotary phone.

"With these people, what I tell them is because my wife and I have been married for so long, we know what each other's thinking before we say it. My wife ... knows all of my material. I can still make her laugh good and her me, but it's just tougher to make us laugh all the time," Coffey said. "When I meet new people, I say they don't know any of my material. I'm starting over."

Coffey said much of that comedic material comes from long hours in a tractor. During one of those tractor trips on his Charleston farmland, Coffey said he had the idea to gut the rotary phone that hung in his shed and turn it into a prop.

Coffey said he first brought the phone out in public on Oct. 18, 2012.

That day he visited American Realty in Charleston and received some of the same reactions he does eight years later.

Farming and funny business are not the only focuses in Coffey's life. Family, faith and fitness are all key to the Coffeys' lifestyle.

Coffey and his wife spend much of their time working with the youth of their church, New Life Fellowship in Terre Haute. At any given time, Coffey said he and Marylee teach 65 to 100 kids at the church.

Tradition is something the Coffeys tend to stick to. One such tradition for the family is an annual planking competition at Christmastime.

Coffey said every member of the family old enough to hold a plank position competes each year to see who can hold the ab exercise pose the longest. This past Christmas, Coffey was the winner, holding his plank for over six minutes, beating the previous family record of six minutes, seven seconds.

Fitness is very important to Coffey and his wife. He said staying active will allow him to be around longer to complete God's work.

"I just do everything I can do to stay



Culver's manager and operator Chris Debolt, left, holds a modern cellphone to his ear while Gary Coffey, right, holds onto a rotary phone at Culver's in Effingham.

fit because I want to be around as long as I can to do my part. I want to be around as long as God lets me be around," Coffey said.

His enthusiasm for fitness sometimes sneaks into his humorous chats with strangers who take notice of his rotary phone, and Coffey said he keeps a joke in his back pocket for such occasions.

"I told them at the restaurant that my wife thinks I am hotter than a stove," Coffey said with a laugh.

Family and a good work ethic are at the core of the Coffeys' values, Coffey said. His son helps him farm, and the Coffeys see their nine grandchildren on a regular basis.

Coffey said his children grew up working small jobs on their family farm in order to teach them what a hard day's work looks like. He said starting out, his family did not have much by means of finances or possessions, but through faith and perseverance, Coffey said he has been able to give his family a decent life.

Though his life's accomplishments and his ability to get a smile out of a stranger is noted by his family and friends, Coffey said he does not want the recognition for his kind acts.

"I don't need anything. Give God the credit for all of our accomplishments," Coffey said. "I feel uncomfortable with people complimenting me. I feel uncomfortable about it because I don't need that."



Top: Gary Coffey, right, converses with Minnesota couple Barb and Mike Trinidad as they wait for their order at Culver's in Effingham.

Above: Gary Coffey, center, shares a laugh with a group of friends who were out to lunch at Niemerg's Steakhouse. Shown are, on the left side of the table from left to right, Dorris Cress, Andy Verdeyen and Darrell Cress and on the right side of the table from front, Shirley Ingram, Patsy Bush, Bob Bush and Bob Ingram Sr.

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Kaitlin Cordes photo  
Volunteers serve a line of community members during the annual Effingham County FISH Thanksgiving Dinner at St. Anthony Parish Center.

# FISH has served the community for 50 years

CRYSTAL REED  
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

A local ministry, run by volunteers and dedicated to helping those in need, is celebrating 50 years this year.

FISH was founded in 1970 in Effingham and has been serving the county with no paid people for the duration of its existence.

Susan Elke, the organization's president, said FISH has about 300 volunteers who help institute the various ministries.

FISH was started by three women in Effingham County – Nancy Deters, Mary Ellen Rauch and Jennie Swanson. The effort started when one of the local churches called with someone needing help getting to a medical appointment.

In the early days, the founders

worked out of their houses and in some cases would check on people daily.

They created Project Reassurance, a daily telephone checking system in which a person would call a FISH line daily to report their well being. A volunteer at the hospital would then check their name off a list of those enrolled in the free program, such as the elderly. If no call was received, a FISH volunteer would be contacted to investigate. The 24-hour hotline also served as an answering service, linking callers in need of any FISH service with volunteers who can help.

People would drop off clothes at the homes, as well as donate toys for the Christmas store.

In 1997, the FISH operating budget established a line item that would allocate money toward the purchase or rent of a warehouse facility. In the first quarter of 1997, FISH was awarded

\$20,000 from the George Kluthe Trust Fund, which became seed money.

The City of Effingham agreed to lease land to FISH at a reasonable rate. The Building Committee approached Habitat For Humanity to serve as the general contractor for the new warehouse.

Construction on the FISH Service Center began in September 1997.

In October 1997, a fundraising campaign was kicked off with a completion date of December. More than \$50,000 was raised.

The FISH Service Center was dedicated in June 1998. The service center is 4,800 square feet and located at 708 South Linden Street.

Today the organization has a wide variety of outreaches.

One of those is Meals on Wheels. Around 60 FISH volunteers deliver special diet meals prepared at HSHS St.



Chrystal Reed photo  
Dennis Bushur, Cathy Freimuth and Kathy Bushur volunteer at the 2019 Christmas Day Dinner organized by FISH.

Anthony's Memorial Hospital to medically referred clients every weekday.

FISH's largest expenditure is emergency services. Those services include housing, assistance with energy bills, food and medication. Elke said FISH generally will guide people to sources that receive government money, but if their needs cannot be met, they will try and help. The service is only provided to those in need once a year.

Another service is the Clothes Closet, which is free to those in need every 90 days, but a person must qualify. The organization serves 300-400 people per year through this outreach.

Around the holidays, FISH provides a community Thanksgiving Day dinner that is open to all in the county. Usually, about 100 people volunteer for the event. In 2019, FISH served over 650 meals with 430 delivered and over 220 attending the church site, including volunteers.

FISH also provides transportation. The organization has a van and SUV volunteers use to drive clients to medical appointments locally and long distance. They travel to St. Louis, Springfield, Decatur, Champaign and elsewhere. They also give vouchers to people who have their own vehicle but need gas to get to their appointments. Elke said transportation assistance is one of the organization's biggest needs. The

vehicles travel about 9,000 miles in a three-month period.

FISH also helps get children ready for school. The organization gives school supplies to children entering kindergarten through eighth grade who are in need in Effingham County. Each child gets a new backpack, shoe voucher, toothbrush and toothpaste, required scientific calendar in sixth grade and other required supplies. In 2019, FISH served 280 students.

FISH has a long tradition of helping brighten the holidays for families in need through its Christmas store. Last Christmas FISH served 300 seniors and disabled with a bag of food, a stocking and a \$10 gift card. Also, they were able to come to the FISH Clothes Closet to "shop" for clothes and housewares. The store served 262 families with food and clothing and 672 children with toys.

A newer holiday tradition the organization has started marked its third year in 2019. FISH's countywide Christmas Day Dinner served over 600 meals and delivered more than 400 with the help of 70-80 volunteers.

FISH also has a parking lot giveaway twice a year. Elke said that they usually have around 80 tall kitchen bags filled with items FISH has on hand for that particular giveaway and it is open to everyone.



Charles Mills photo  
Volunteer Rebecca Holste, left, and Effingham County FISH Human Services Co-President Susan Elke, right, sort out meals Christmas day morning in the Sacred Heart Parish Center in Effingham.

FISH lost one of its most dedicated volunteers Harold Heth, who died earlier this year.

Heth had been delivering meals since the early 1990s and provided 24/7 emergency services to those in need. Elke said Heth did everything for the organization, even if it wasn't part of his normal duties.

"He was very giving," she said. "He would know a lot of the situations and try to help people out."

Besides being a volunteer, Heth was a veteran and did a lot of stuff under the radar, Elke said.

"He was my best friend," said Elke.

Elke said the organization mainly thrives on donations of money and items such as clothing, furniture and housewares.

"What we have is what is donated except for the Christmas store when toys are bought," she said.

The organization also receives funding for school supplies through a United Way grant and funding for utilities through the Cobalt Trust.

As part of their 50-year celebration, FISH has a goal of raising \$50,000.

"If every resident in the county gave \$1 that would be \$34,000," Elke said.

On June 20, FISH will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a carnival on the square in Effingham.





Charles Mills photos

The Effingham Noon Rotary Club celebrated 100 years of service to the Effingham Community on Feb. 1 at the Thelma Keller Convention Center. From left are Rotary International Zone 30 and 31 Director Floyd Lancia, Rotary International President Mark Maloney, Noon Rotary Club President Beverly Soltwedel and Rotary International District 6490 Governor Julie Dobski.

Left: Rotary International Zone 30 and 31 Director Floyd Lancia makes a presentation Feb. 1 at the Thelma Keller Convention Center recognizing Noon Rotary Club's 100 years of service to the community.

Bottom: Rotary International President Mark Maloney of Decatur, Alabama, was keynote speaker for Noon Rotary Club's 100th celebration at the Thelma Keller Convention Center on Feb. 1.

## Noon Rotary celebrates 100 years

CHARLES MILLS  
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

Rotarians from central Illinois gathered at the Thelma Keller Convention Center in Effingham on Feb. 1 to help the Noon Rotary Club celebrate 100 years of

service to the community.

The local chapter got its start with Benjamin F. Kagay, who came up with the idea to organize a Rotary Club in Effingham after attending a Rotary club meeting in Chicago in 1919.

Effingham Noon Rotary was officially chartered as a Rotary International

organization on Feb. 1, 1920, and sponsored by the Decatur, Illinois, Rotary Club. Its first weekly luncheon meeting was held Feb. 11, 1920, at the Raleigh Hotel.

Members of the Effingham organization at the time the club was chartered were Kagay, president; Henry B. Wernsing, vice president; Dr. E.L. Damron, secretary; Fred M. Vane, treasurer; Dr. C.E. Bellchamber; Lewis H. Bissel; Lester P. Brewer; C.L. Fisher; Byron K. LeCrone; Herbert J. Rueker; I.H. Schulte; W.J. Sullivan; H.A. Under-riner; Fred C. Wenthe; David L. Wright; and Charles J. Moritz.

The Effingham Noon Rotary club was instrumental in establishing regional clubs including Centralia, 1920; Mattoon, 1921; Flora, 1922; Shelbyville, 1922; Olney, 1922; Robinson, 1924; Casey, 1925; Vandalia, 1925; Newton, 1925; Salem, 1927; Oblong, 1928; and Charleston, 1928. The Effingham Sunrise Rotary Club began in 1994.

Effingham Noon Rotary President Dr. William F. Sargent was presented on Feb. 4, 1970, a proclamation from then Effingham Mayor L. Keller creating an official Rotary Day that kicked off a month of planned festivities observing the 50th anniversary of its charter on Feb. 1, 1970.

The presentation was made during a breakfast at the Holiday Inn. Ed Howard was in charge of the program during the special breakfast, which had the theme "Things that were happening in 1920."

Four women were invited to join the Effingham Rotary club for the first time in 1987. They were Jo Ann McNaughton-Kade, Saralee Griffith, Cheryl Compton and Marilyn Purcell. Today, the Effingham Noon Rotary Club's president is Beverly Soltwedel.

The club's current membership and Rotary members from surrounding communities listened to keynote speaker Rotary International President Mark Maloney of Decatur, Alabama, at the special 100th anniversary meeting on Feb. 1.

Maloney isn't a stranger to the state of Illinois. He was raised in the Popcorn Capital of the World, Ridgeway, located east of Marion and north of Equality.

*"Everything the Rotary Club of Effingham has done in the intervening 100 years to make Effingham, the United States and the world a better place."*

Mark Maloney

"It's great to be here in Effingham, Illinois," Maloney said.

Maloney said that day marked the second time he visited Effingham in the past 12 months.

"In my youth, I would pass through Effingham on the way to the University of Illinois in Champaign," he said.

Maloney said he enjoys traveling to different Rotary clubs in the U.S. and internationally with his position. This year marks the 115th year of Rotary International.

Maloney noted another Rotary club celebrating the century mark this year is Rotary Club of Calcutta.

"They were the first club in India and the first club in all of south Asia," said Maloney. "And I will be there for their centennial."

Maloney also noted that eight clubs in England will celebrate their centennials this year. He said with over 235 club centennials last year, he wasn't able to attend all of them.

"We are moving into a time when Rotary's growth is more rapid," Maloney said.

Maloney said Rotary started with only four members in Chicago and has grown into an organization with clubs in nearly every country of the world, boasting more than 1.2 million members.

"And that's what we are here to celebrate, not the founding of this club or the nice round number of years passed," Maloney said. "We are here to celebrate everything this club has achieved since Feb. 1, 1920."

"Everything the Rotary Club of Effingham has done in the intervening 100 years to make Effingham, the United States and the world a better place," he said.

Maloney said a Rotary anniversary is an opportunity to look back over time.

"Each individual act of service can sometimes seem insignificant,"

he said. "But when you multiply all of those acts by all Rotarians over all of those years, then you add them together with all of the tens of thousands of clubs around the world throughout their histories, you start to realize the kind of impact that every one of us can be a part of."

Some of the community service projects of Noon Rotary over the years has included providing trees for Harmony Playground; fundraising for CEFS Headstart; a dictionary program for third grade students in Effingham County; Meals on Wheels; a pavilion at Community Park; sponsorship of several area Rotary clubs, including Vandalia, Salem and Flora; projects in Guatemala; being a co-sponsor of Fourth of July fireworks in Effingham; and sponsorship of a Rotary club in Uganda.

Also making a presentation during the event was Rotary International District 6490 Governor Julie Dobski. Effingham has had four past district governors — Harry S. Parker, 1926; Lowell D. Samuel, 1956; Howard S. Parker, 1968; and Ronald R. Schettler in 2011.

Several local Rotarians have received Paul Harris Fellow Awards, including Noon Rotary President Beverly Soltwedel, Monte Bartels, Charlie Brumleve, Don Dawkins, Kaye Dent, Ron Diehl, Robert Fergus, Tom Henderson, Lois Hoene, John Kay, Norma Lansing, Russ Marvel, Larry O'Dell, Dick Rhodes, David Ring, Gregg Sapp, Ron Schettler, Mike Schmidt, Tonya Siner, Mark Wildbur, Amanda Williamson and Debbie Womack. The award is named after Rotary founder Paul Harris.





# Unusual architecture distinguishes Beecher City home

CHARLES MILLS  
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

A newly constructed house in Beecher City is all about curves. Its walls and roof arch upward like a barn, with a wall of windows that give it an outdoor/indoor feel.

Tony Schlanser and his brother, Bob, of Houston, built the home and are planning more just like it. The duo were born in Effingham and grew up on a dairy farm north of Beecher City.

"We are kind of used to hard work," Tony Schlanser said.

The new 1,700-square-foot three-bedroom, 2 1/2-bathroom house the Schlanser brothers built is similar to the home Tony Schlanser built in the 1980s after salvaging an old barn.

"That was the seed for the structure of this house," Schlanser said. "We really like the arched roof look. We really think it's a unique structure."

The house features radiant heat and looks similar to an A-frame home with a more smooth and refined barn-style arched architecture.

"Everything is on a curve," Bob Schlanser said. "We're like the school teacher who grades on a curve. We build on a curve and they grade on a curve."

Bob Schlanser said it was quite a challenge to get the upper portions of the walls to curve with the arch of the structure.

"We built this on a concrete pad with radiant heat that heats the floor," Tony Schlanser said. "We also have an electric furnace backup."

Schlanser said piping goes into the concrete in a series of loops that heats the floor and makes more comfortable

Charles Mills photos  
Shown is a 1,700 sq. ft. 3 bedroom, 2 1/2 bath home with a two-car garage built by Tony and Bob Schlanser.



heat.  
“You’re heating the concrete mass,” Schlanser said. “It’s on-demand type heating. You heat the water and the energy is stored in the mass of the concrete.”

Schlanser said it could be easily coupled with a solar-powered system. He said the lot where the house is located has plenty of extra room for solar panels.

“We both have solar systems in our personal houses,” Bob Schlanser said. “Our idea was to make this the model house and build some more if anyone had any interest.”

“This is an all-electric house and it’s our hope whoever buys this house uses photoelectric panels,” Tony Schlanser said.

“It is also set up if someone wanted to use gas,” Bob Schlanser added.

Tony Schlanser said he and his brother decided to build the house because they were both retired and had an interest in building something unusual. Schlanser owned a small rental company utilizing his construction skills. He also worked for a fertilizer



Tony Schlanser, left, and his brother Bob Schlanser, right, built a barn-style 1,700 sq. ft. 3 bedroom, 2 ½ bath home in Beecher City.

company and Exxon Oil as a technician/operator.

“I went to Eastern Illinois University to study alternate energy systems,” Tony Schlanser said. “There was a big push in the ‘70s for geothermal and then it was

ignored for a period of time.”  
“And now it’s starting to resurface,” Schlanser added.

Bob Schlanser worked for Hewlett-Packard for 27 years before retiring six years ago. After retirement, he became interested in solar panels and house building.

“Since I lived in Houston, Texas, we would work on it intermittently,” Bob Schlanser said. “I would come home for a couple months in the summer and throughout the year I would come when I could.”

The house features one bedroom on ground level and two upstairs. The ground level of the home was built to be wheelchair accessible. There is also a wide door entryway leading from the bedroom to the bathroom.

“All the doorways are 36 inches wide,” Bob Schlanser said.

“A senior person could live on the first level pretty easily,” Tony Schlanser said. Leading up to the second floor of the home is a custom-made railing.

One bedroom on the upper lever is large enough to be used as a master bedroom while another bedroom



Top: Tricia Schlanser in the kitchen of a new home built by her husband Tony Schlanser and his brother Bob Schlanser of Houston, Texas. Above: Curved paneling follows the arched barn-style architecture of a Beecher City house. Right: Special radiant windows in the Schlanser house generate 10-15 degrees more heat in the winter. The windows help light the living and dining rooms during the day.



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could be used as an office with a glass pocket door that has a view of the outside through several passive solar windows.

Bob Schlanser said the passive solar windows generate heat in the living room during the winter months and a new owner might consider louver system during the summer months to reduce heat gain throughout the home.

"You get a lot of heat gain from those windows in the wintertime," Bob Schlanser said. "When there is a sunny day out, it makes the house 10-15 degrees warmer."

The kitchen area is located on the first floor. It includes a dual sink, large pantry storage area, kitchen island, cabinetry and raised breakfast bar dining counter.

Panels were bent to create a round-cathedral-style look to the interior walls. Interior lights are strategically hidden in the wood trim at the base of the curved wall panels that can be used as mood lighting to illuminate and accent the wall panels during the evening hours. There are four interior mood lighting options available, all controlled by a master switch.

A spacious two-car garage is built into the rear of the home, allowing for easy access to the first floor. Light sensors on the exterior of the house trigger sidewalk lighting, and there is lighting around the exterior of the house.

Schlanser said Beecher City is in need of new home construction.

"In general, there is no new construction in Beecher City," Schlanser said. "Career people trying to relocate to Beecher City have to look elsewhere for housing."

Tony Schlanser said one of the many features of the house is its close proximity to Beecher City Grade School, which received an exemplary rating from the Illinois State Board of Education. It is the highest rating a grade school can receive.

Schlanser said the house also is located within the Tri-County Fire Protection District.

"There is a lot of community spirit here that is not recognized," Bob Schlanser said.

Top: Shown is a custom-made railing in the barn-style house built by Tony and Bob Schlanser. Right: Shown is the dining area in the new house.



Shown is a bathroom on the second floor of the Beecher City house built by Tony and Bob Schlanser.

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Charles Mills photos

Above: Monterey Chicken Breast with Rich n' Cheesy Macaroni is just one example of a dinner item offered by Modern Family Dinners. There is a new menu every week with a variety of choices. Right: Modern Family Dinners Owner Allie Weber prepares chives and peppers before cooking one of her dinners in the former Neoga grade school kitchen.



## Dinners for the modern family

CHARLES MILLS  
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

Times have changed. Today it takes two incomes to meet the family budget and sometimes cooking dinner for the family every day is not a practical option.

A local woman has found a solution for the home-cooked meal without all the prep work.

Allie Weber created Modern Family Dinners from an idea she brought back to Illinois from her sister, Toni Lesak, who lives in southern Georgia. Modern Family Dinners offers prepared meals that can be easily heated in the oven and served.

"It's for busy families," Weber said. "Now that both parents are working and kids are involved with so many activities by the time you get home, there is no time left to do the prep, cooking and dishes."

After witnessing the response her sister was getting during Lesak's first

two years in business, Weber decided to try it herself. Weber spent five days in southern Georgia helping her sister before she started selling her dinners in mid-July of last year.

"She was having a lot of success with this," Weber said. "And I knew this is something I wanted to do."

Weber offers two size options – a dinner for two and a dinner for six. Modern Family Dinners offers a full meal dinner for two for \$18 and dinner for six is \$35. Every week Weber tries to offer a different menu.

"I do two side options with every meal," Weber said. "I think it's fun to cook. And it's really serving a need in the community."

Weber said her clientele is 50 percent families while the other half is retirees.

"There is something for everyone," Weber said.

Weber posts two menus online - one for the current week and another for the following week - on her website [modernfamilydinners.com](http://modernfamilydinners.com).

"Everything is ordered online," Weber said. "I recently put an iPad in my store in Effingham. That way, if you walk in on Saturday, I can help you place your order."

Weber said all weekly meal orders need to be placed by Tuesday at 2 p.m. and are available for pickup in either Effingham or Neoga. Effingham hours are from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday or Monday 4-6 p.m. Ordered meals can be picked up at 207 North Fourth Street in downtown Effingham. Pickup in Neoga is Saturday morning from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. at 641 West Sixth Street at the former grade school cafeteria located in back of the building.

"Also, if you're coming to Effingham for work and live in Altamont, Newton, Dieterich, Olney, Flora or live in the surrounding area, you can pick up on Monday," Weber said.

"The meals that you pick up are good through Thursday," Weber said. "I cook on Friday and they are good for seven days."

She cooks her meals in the former grade school kitchen now owned by the City of Neoga.

"Being from Neoga, I knew this building was unoccupied," Weber said. "I stopped in the city office and discussed it with them and found out the kitchen was not being used."

"I rent the kitchen and the cafeteria from the city," Weber said.

Weber said her meals come either refrigerated or frozen. Frozen meals expire in 90 days.

"We cook everything properly to temperature," Weber said. "And then you follow the reheating instructions."

"The refrigerated meals take about 30 minutes to reheat," Weber said. "Frozen options take as long as 90 minutes to prepare."

She has two employees working for her, Dawn Heuerman and Karen Deters.

Weber has a regular routine every week. On Monday, she tries recipes and decides whether they are good enough to be on the menu. Weber manages her website on Tuesday, tallies her orders and develops a grocery list. She picks up groceries on Wednes-

day. On Wednesday and Thursday, they make the frozen meals and dedicate Friday to cooking the refrigerated ones.

"Growing up, I always enjoyed cooking and grocery shopping," Weber said.

Weber grew up in the Neoga area on the Walk family farm, went to grade school in Sigel and was a member of the 2004 Neoga High School graduating class.

After she received a bachelor's degree in Agribusiness from the University of Illinois Champaign, Weber entered a management training program with Nestlé, working in Bloomington and Gaffney, South Carolina, in production and Los Angeles in corporate purchasing. Her husband, Brandon, is an Effingham native.

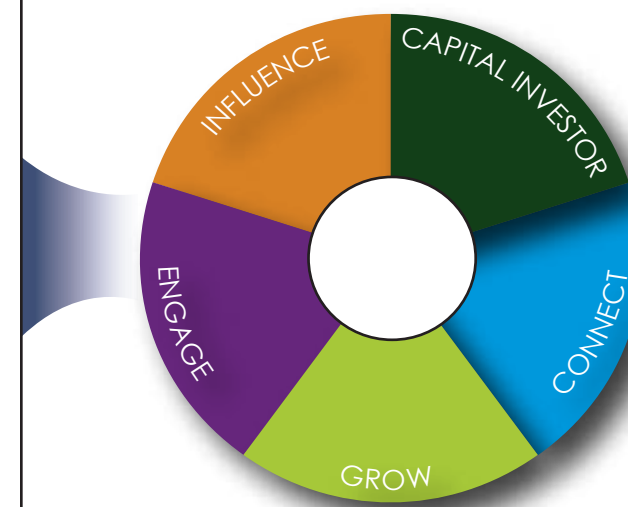
"It was time to relocate again in the program," Weber said. "So, we decided to move home at the end of 2012."

Weber took a position at Walk Stock Farm, where she was raised. She served as ween-to-finish off-site operations manager before devoting all of her time to Modern Family Dinners.



Allie Weber chops chives in preparation of making a meal for Modern Family Dinners.

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# Nurse practitioner opens Effingham office

CHARLES MILLS  
EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

An Effingham nurse practitioner has opened her own practice, a first of its kind for the area.

Gentle Care Consultants LLC is a new independent medical practice owned by Shelly Kuhns. It's located at 2201 North Willenborg St., Suite 1 in Effingham.

Kuhns has been a nurse for 30 years. She earned her advanced practice license in 2010 and is a hospitalist and neurology advanced practice nurse. She has been a part of the hospitalist group at Carle Foundation Hospital, Sarah Bush and HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital during her career.

Two years ago Illinois passed an independent practice bill for experienced advanced practice nurses. Last year Kuhns submitted her application. She was granted a license with full practice authority in July from the State of Illinois, allowing her to practice on her own with limited oversight.

"This isn't something new," Kuhns said. "There are 21 states that allow independent practice for experienced advanced practice nurses. You can't start a practice right after finishing school. You have to have experience as well."

"However, we are the first in Effingham," Kuhns said. "So I guess you could say it is novel for the Effingham area."

Kuhns has a consulting doctor that she works with when necessary. However, she can write prescription orders, diagnose and treat patients. She said she is required to have a consulting doctor on record, and she reaches out



Charles Mills photos of Effingham.  
Tina Kasdorf, MSed, left, and Shelly Kuhns, MSN, APRN-FPA, CCNS, right, are Gentle Care Consultants, LLC

to the doctor once a month.

"I was thinking about retiring, because I'm kind of busy with my kids, farm and school board responsibilities," Kuhns said. Kuhns is president of the Altamont Unit 10 school board.

However, Kuhns still wanted to continue using her health education and experience that she had invested.

Her husband, Stan Kuhns, gave her the idea to start her own practice and see the kind of patients she wants to see.

"It's really been a goal of mine for a long time to help the community," Kuhns said. "With the kind of jobs I've had, I've had to work away from the area."

Kuhns said Gentle Care Consultants offers primary mental health, complex care coordination and family and caregiver assistance.

"We work for the underserved population," Kuhns said. "We are a low-volume practice. I only see about six to eight patients a week and we have long appointments."

"Our goal is to fill the voids that we know exist in the community," Kuhns said.

She said she only sees patients three days a week by appointment.

"Appointments are about an hour long," Kuhns said.

Kuhns said people who gravitate to her practice need more than a 15-minute appointment. She sees patients who have complex mental health or medical issues who need coordination, depending upon their situation.

She wanted to create a nontraditional practice that isn't located near a medical park or clustered with a group of other medical offices.

*"Our goal is to fill the voids that we know exist in the community."*

Shelly Kuhns

"We do have medical equipment like blood pressure cuffs and stethoscopes, but we've hidden all of that and wanted to make it look like a welcoming non-threatening environment," Kuhns said.

"Hopefully, we have designed this place to be more warm and inviting," Kuhns said. "My goal was to create a space where people would come and take care of themselves and not feel threatened by health care."

Working in the office with Kuhns is Tina Kasdorf, a licensed environmental health practitioner.

"I worked for the State of Illinois inspecting nursing homes for 27 years," Kasdorf said.

Kasdorf has a master's degree in Health Education from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and received her Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Health Science from Indiana State University.

During a time when she inspected facilities for the State of Illinois, she worked closely with a group of nurses. Prior to her career in long-term care, Kasdorf worked at the Jackson County Health Department.

"A majority of my work was institutional sanitation," Kasdorf said.

Kasdorf said her 27 years in long-term care included infection control, food safety, looking at geriatrics in regards to medication, looking at residents physical and mental environment.

Kuhns and Kasdorf met through their children, who attended school together. When Kuhns was thinking about starting an independent practice, she tapped Kasdorf to be her clinic coordinator.

"We decided our skills fit together pretty well, especially with my experience with geriatrics and it gives me the opportunity to use my health education degree," Kasdorf said.

"I am here to help folks plan their aging," Kasdorf said.

Kasdorf said she can help clients



Gentle Care Consultants, LLC is located in the same building as Agracel, Inc. at 2201 North Willenborg Street, Suite 1, Effingham.

make decisions on whether an aging parent should stay in their home or seek long-term care.

"I look at what kind of environment they envision themselves being in as they age," Kasdorf said. "We also look at what adjustments that can be made of their physical surroundings. Then, attempting to get their family on the same page."

"Some elders don't want to be a burden to their family, so they want to make some plans ... and not just wait to the point they are not able to that leaves family members to make decisions for them," Kasdorf said.

With her long-term care experience, Kasdorf said she wants to be the person someone reaches out to when they don't know what to do when their parent or loved one is in a long-term nursing facility and possibly needs to be monitored.

Kasdorf said in doing research online, she discovered people were hiring private detectives to monitor their loved one in a long-term care facility to check for abuse. While Kasdorf isn't a private detective, she has experience

with the operations of a long-term care facility.

That's when she came up with the idea of offering her knowledge and experience professionally.

"I'm able to go in, look at that family member's surroundings, see how they are doing," Kasdorf said. "I can then talk to Shelly about their physical condition and medications they are taking."

Kasdorf said she could help families who have to leave for vacation, move out of town or have a family member living away from the Effingham area. Kasdorf said she could visit their family members in long-term care while they are away from home and report back to them.

"And since I have a lot of experience in long-term care, I know who to go talk to at a facility or talk to their physician depending upon the situation," Kasdorf said. "I just thought that would be a service people would be interested in."

For more information or to make an appointment at Gentle Care Consultants call 217-722-1896.

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# 2020 Effingham Daily News Citizen of the Year

## Ann Deters

Entrepreneur  
Mentor  
Giver

DAWN SCHABBING

Ann Deters has been described by her family as competitive, hard-working, giving and kind. Her siblings point to her competitive and caring nature, while her children say they have learned from her to never give up.

To the community, she exhibits all those qualities and more.

Letters nominating Ann for the 2020 Effingham Daily News Citizen of the Year describe her as not only giving and kind, but someone who works for the betterment of a community, the county, the country and even the world.

When the Effingham resident received the honor at the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce gala, she told the crowd that together more good things could come for the community.

Chet Piotrowski Jr. photo/Piotrowski Studios  
Ann Deters poses with the Citizen of the Year award at the 2020 Effingham County Chamber of Commerce Business Recognition Gala at the Thelma Keller Convention Center.

Submitted photo  
Righ: Shown is the Deters family in 2014. Front row are Alex, Ann, Dennis and Caroline; back row, Scott, Jeff and Kayla and Neil.

"We have so many things going for us in this community and we can continue to do great, great things," she said.

Surprised by the announcement, Ann quickly turned her thoughts to her mother, Fran Schultz, who was given the same honor in 2007. Her mother had a big heart and always wanted to help those in need, she recalled.

"It's often said that success in life is about choosing the right parents," said Ann. "My life is a reflection of this. Sharing this award with my mother is an honor and a privilege as it allows me to continue her legacy.

Success can be found in all facets of Ann's life. She's a wife to Dennis, mother of five – Jeff, 31; Neal, 29; Scott, 26; Alex, 20; and Caroline, 17 – and the CEO of Vantage Outsourcing, a cataract surgical service provider based in Effingham, which provides services in 30 states.

She still finds time to serve on a number of boards, both nonprofit and for-profit. With all her endeavors, there's no signs of her slowing down.

"I'm energized to do more," said Ann. "It's best to look at what you can do to make someone else's life better. The more you can look out, as opposed to in, the more meaningful your life becomes."

She adheres to the advice of another Citizen of the Year, the late Craig Lindvahl, who was bestowed the honor in 2015.

"Craig always said, 'Wake up every morning and figure out how you can make someone else's life better.'" Ann was noted by several to be a natural leader, even at a young age. Today as the CEO of her own company, she is driven and dedicated, contributing to many boards and organizations with which she's involved. But it's her altruism that has made an impact on those who nominated her.

In his nomination letter, 2018 Citizen of the Year Dr. Nash Naam said Ann is distinguished in her kindness and her philosophy in giving back, namely in her medical missions to Mexico, Bolivia, El Salvador, Honduras and Haiti. Those missions provide more than 5,000 eye surgical procedures and exams, he described.



At home, Naam said Ann is also busy giving back by helping start up the Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program for high school students and being a mentor, investor, speaker and sponsor for the program.

In another letter, Leon and Deb Holschbach, also noted Ann's work with the CEO program, adding she uses her talents, energy and accomplishments to pour back into others' lives by also serving on boards for business and community.

The numerous boards Ann has served on include AKRA Builders, Midland States Bank, Lake Land College and Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for children, finance council of St. Anthony Parish and schools for nine years, as well as numerous nonprofit boards in Effingham, Chicago and St. Louis. Ann has also served at the state level as a board member of the Teachers Retirement Systems State of Illinois, 2015-2017, and has served as the chairwoman of the Board of Directors and president to Physician Surgery Center of Rolla, Missouri, 2002-2011.

"She is truly a woman of integrity and strong moral character who expresses her desire for the betterment of humankind in her own community as well as globally, both through her words and works," wrote Jerry McDaniel in his nomination letter.

### FAMILY

Ann, 61, and her husband, Dennis Deters, 63, have known each other since grade school and began dating when Ann was a senior at Teutopolis High School. They married Aug. 27, 1983, at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Teutopolis.

While Dennis said it was obvious early on Ann was the determined type, he had no clue she "would be the dynamo she is."

"I was struck more by her energy at accomplishing the goal in front of her – at any given task," said Dennis. "I was drawn to her because she enjoyed all challenges of life – business, travel, education. She was always ready to try anything intriguing. She was just always fun to be with."

Dennis said Ann especially loves the challenge of turning the word 'no' into a 'yes.' She knows the approach might need to be different, but a determined and driven woman like Ann makes it possible, he said. She gives it her all – all of the time, he added.

"She is driven to the stars, especially for women. And she is not afraid to call out the male gender who denigrates women. She has worked in the corporate world being paid less – just because of her gender," he said.

Dennis works for Vantage Outsourcing as an account executive. He said sometimes there is a misconception





Submitted photo  
Jack, Jane, Joe, Mary, Ann and Jim Schultz in 1961.

that because he's standing next to Ann, he's the CEO of the company.

"Ann knows that a man, by nature, can have more physical muscle," said Dennis. "But the 'muscle' in between the ears is different."

She also is not afraid to tackle tough problems, even if the topic is unpopular in her community.

"Ann feels being involved and connected to the community is important," said Dennis. "She recently took on a big project to raise awareness of sex trafficking in the area. The tragedy of sex trafficking and how prevalent it is in our area and surrounding areas is a sad fact and sad that people of Effingham County feel it does not happen here. Ann continually wants to help shut this tragic plague down in our society."

She has also strove to instill some of her qualities in her children.

Her eldest child, Jeff, and youngest Caroline attest that some of the best lessons their mother gave them was to never give up and to reach for the stars.

"My mom's work ethic has taught me that one should never give up when things get tough," said Jeff. "She taught all of us from a very young age that if we wanted to do anything in the business world that we would have to work hard and be willing to make the tough decisions."

Jeff said his mother is one of the best when it comes to being efficient, managing time well and scheduling. Those skills came in handy with five children at home.

"We used to have a big calendar in our house that everyone used to keep track of sporting events and other things," said Jeff. "She in turn used this to keep her work calendar in sync with

*"Her true passion is to foster others around her to succeed, which is the true sign of a great leader."*

*Jeff Deters*

her personal life."

Jeff said his mother instilled in him an understanding that numbers matter.

"My mom always told me that you have to know numbers to understand a business. This is why I chose to study finance," he said. "She has always been very good at nurturing each of our passions for study/careers with her advice. She's very quick to point out where each of us are successful – and then teaching us how to expand on that success."

He added, "Her true passion is to foster others around her to succeed, which is the true sign of a great leader."

Caroline said her mother has been a great role model for her especially because she showed her a great example of a successful woman.

"She has taught me to never give up in what you believe in and to let your passions drive you to your success and where you want to be in life," said the St. Anthony High School senior. "She also showed me what women now are able to do and able to achieve in our world today."

But mostly, Caroline said she taught her to live life to the fullest.

"Laugh as much as possible and love what you do in everything you do," she said.

While Caroline said some may describe her mother as "intimidating," she's actually very friendly and one of the nicest people anyone could meet.

"She is always trying to help people find jobs and connecting people together to help each other out," said Caroline. "And as hard as she works for herself in being successful and the best in everything, she is still there cheering us on. She never gives up on anything she sets her mind to."

Younger brother Jim Schultz said his sister is deserving of the Citizen of the year recognition.

"She does things in her own quiet, but assertive way," said Jim. "When she's asked to do something, she never does anything short of 100 percent. When you look at previous winners of this award, that's the consistent theme: They put their heart, passion and spirit behind whatever they are going to do

– and they get it done."

Deters will have an opportunity to share her philosophy and wisdom with future generations as she enters a new chapter in her life in 2020 – grandparenting – with two babies expected in the early part of this year.

#### GROWING UP

Ann Schultz Deters grew up in an entrepreneurial family, the daughter of John H. and Frances C. Schultz.

The fifth of eight children, her brother, Jim, describes her as "intensely competitive, in a good way." The Schultzes had four sons and four daughters, Jack, the eldest, then Jane, Joe (deceased in 1972), Mary, Ann, Jim, Nancy and Bob.

"Dad was quiet, but a powerful leader," said Ann. "He was known as a 'serial entrepreneur' having started up numerous successful companies – AKRA Builders, Three Z Printing, Fairfield and Shelbyville Cable TV Company."

Ann said she learned plenty from both of her parents.

"Dad taught us how to work, while Mom taught us how to love. Both taught us how to give back," she said.

Jim said his sister was always loving, caring and willing to help out when needed.

"She was a leader growing up, intensely competitive in nearly everything – in sports, academics – or cleaning the dinner table, but always in a good way," said Jim.

"She was probably the best basketball player in our neighborhood growing up," recalled Jim. "But, more importantly, she was very loving, very caring, and always there to help out in whatever needed to be done. This still holds true today – and she's still a good athlete."

Being just a year apart in school, Jim could see Ann's God-given talents and leadership skills.

"I could see in the friendships she developed, in how she interacted with those friends, and that she was class president and student council president – she had natural leadership skills," said Jim. "When we were just 8 or 9 years old, she'd get out on the basketball court and she'd be point guard

and direct the team and guide us. It was just natural instinct for her."

Jim said Ann was gifted some of the best qualities from both their parents.

Her mother, who became a nurse and later a nurse anesthetist, was considered a lifelong learner and giver to help make others' lives easier. Among the many things her father accomplished was helping to build The Cross at the Crossroads.

Neither of them sought recognition for what they did for the community.

"My mother was always there to help people, but never was seeking recognition or anything," said Jim. "It's in the DNA I guess that Ann has the same caring and compassionate ways to help others. Like our parents, Ann has the DNA to do what is right and not what is to her glory, so to speak."

Eldest brother Jack Schultz said his sister has consistently stepped forward to help in any way she can,

"People have recognized her leadership abilities and she has continued to set the bar even higher. It's a wonderful recognition of the many contributions Ann has made to Effingham and east central Illinois."

Jack said he could see her competitive spirit and leadership abilities from a very early age.

"She excelled at tennis and other sports and was the only one in the family to play a competitive sport beyond high school, earning a tennis scholarship to Indiana State University."

#### BUSINESSWOMAN

Ann graduated Teutopolis High School in 1976, went on to earn a sports scholarship to compete in Division 1 tennis at Indiana State University in Terre Haute until 1978. She then transferred to Southern Methodist University of Dallas, Texas, in 1979, where she earned an accounting degree at the Cox School of Business in 1980.

Ann began her professional career at Price Waterhouse Coopers in St. Louis after graduating from SMU and earning her CPA. She obtained an Executive MBA degree from the Northwestern Kellogg School of Business in Chicago in 1990. She did this while commuting to Chicago on weekends for two years and working at J.M. Schultz Investment Co., a company founded by her father.

As a third-generation entrepreneur, she has carried on the family tradition of successfully starting and growing several companies in the health care



Submitted photo  
Top: Ann during Vantage Outsourcing medical eye mission trip in Mexico with mother, Fran Schultz.  
Above: Ann is pictured during Vantage Outsourcing medical eye mission in El Salvador in 1998.

industry.

Ann co-founded with family members Vantage Outsourcing, a cataract surgical service provider, in 1990 and later became CEO. Ann saw a need in the medical industry – namely in the ophthalmology field – for an outsource supply company and Vantage Outsourcing was created from the ground up, with its home base in Effingham.

Under her helm, the company has grown to employ 80 people and reach over 30 states, with 17 satellite locations across the United States. It is the second largest company for cataract outsourcing services.

The company enables hospitals and clinics that don't use expensive specialized equipment frequently for such things as cataract surgery to still get the latest equipment technology without a large capital investment. The company provides everything except the surgeon for the procedure for a lease fee.

But long before she began creating a successful company, Ann worked in the family businesses, learning everything she could.

J.M. Schultz Investment Co. owned eight different businesses, which meant Ann sat on many boards, often as the only female. The time spent on those boards was a learning experience that taught her how to navigate a board room.

"I learned by watching others and experimenting with different ways of doing things. For example, I found as a female leader that if I posed my beliefs in the form of a question, it was better

received than in the form of a statement."

Deters said in learning to work as a woman in a man's world, she focused on being herself, building trust and having respect for others.

"My overall goal was to win people over. I never let the female aspect enter my mind nor the thought that I was not capable of doing a particular job."

Ann has no plans to retire. She intends to continue her involvement in business as an investor and a mentor to entrepreneurs and young CEOs.



# Polar Plunging

The 2020 Law Enforcement Torch Run Effingham Polar Plunge raised more than \$40,000 on Feb. 29, beating last year's amount by more than \$4,000.

Two-hundred-forty-four participants plunged into the chilly waters of Lake Sara, some dressed in costume while others donned Polar Plunge T-shirts. In total, the participants raised \$42,432.26.

The Polar Plunge raises funds for Special Olympics Illinois.



Kaitlin Cordes photo

Plungers take to the water during the Effingham 2020 Polar Plunge at Lake Sara Beach.



Kaitlin Cordes photo

Members of the Bikini Bottomers make their way through the chilly waters of Lake Sara during the 2020 Effingham Polar Plunge.



Kaitlin Cordes photo

Special Olympics Illinois Ambassador Bradlee Todd shares a laugh with 104.3 The Party host Michelle Carman during the after party at the Effingham Event Center for the 2020 Effingham Polar Plunge.



Kaitlin Cordes photo

Effingham Polar Plunge Assistant Director Vanessa Duncan and her daughter take the final plunge of the day during the event at Lake Sara.



Kaitlin Cordes photo

The Effingham Lightning Special Olympics team won the golden plunger "trophy" for the best group costume during the after party at Effingham Event Center for the 2020 Effingham Polar Plunge. The group dressed as penguins from the movie "Happy Feet."

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