



THE CHAMBER COURIER

June 2021

The monthly business publication of the Canton Area

**Your Chamber Ambassadors
are here for your business.
Contact them anytime.**

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Rachel Bundy, Graham Health System
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Jason Rockhold, Rockstar Beauty & Spa
Chase Shawgo, Ipava State Bank
Codi Swibold, Hy-Vee Food Stores



Meet the Assistant Director

Many of you know our Chamber's Executive Director, Carla Bobell, who can often be seen bustling around town as she organizes events, makes connections with new business owners, and volunteers on various committees. If you've seen a young woman trailing behind her (admittedly looking a little lost at times), you were probably seeing me, the new Assistant Director for the Canton Area Chamber of Commerce.



My name is Alli Ramsay, and I joined the Chamber in January of this year. My hometown, and where I currently live is Elmwood. However, I only recently returned to the area. In fact, it was almost a year ago exactly that I came back to Central Illinois after finishing my higher education.

I completed my Bachelors of Arts in Political Science and French at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale (Class of '18) before doing a brief two-year stint in France to get my Masters in International Development at a school in Paris.

After adjusting back to life in the States, I was fortunate enough to become the Chamber's Assistant Director shortly after the New Year. Some of you may have received some emails from me, or you might have briefly seen me if you've stopped in to our office in the last few months. I've mostly been working behind the scenes, helping prepare for the Annual Chamber Events like the Annual Dinner, the Golf Outing, and the Cruise-In.

Continued on pg. 8



Thursday, June 17th
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
 At The Venue
 23 W. Pine | Canton, IL 61520

Join us for food, doorprizes, and fun

Chamber Q&A

Question:

Can I schedule a Ribbon Cutting for my business through the Chamber of Commerce?

Answer:

One of the many benefits of joining the Chamber is that you will be able to schedule ribbon cuttings for your business when you become a member.

Once we process a new member's paperwork and payment, one of the first things we do to welcome the business to the community is hold a ribbon cutting. We even provide the ribbon and scissors!

For more information, give us a call at (309) 647-2677 ext. 4, or email us at cantonareachamber@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE BOARD

President - Jana Emmons, Ipava State Bank
Vice President - Lacey Neal, Rock Valley Physical Therapy
Treasurer - Jodi Wilcoxon, MidAmerica National Bank
Secretary - Lisa Gardner, Jim Maloof Realtor

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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 President Curt Oldfield, Spoon River College

STAFF

Executive Director - Carla Bobell
Assistant Director - Alli Ramsay

209 East Chestnut Street, Suite 2
 Canton, IL 61520
 (309) 647-2677
cantonareachamber@gmail.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBER: WINDSHIELD SPECIALISTS

Windshield Specialists opened their first shop in Peoria in 1999 and has been providing quality mobile and in-shop auto glass service for Central Illinois ever since. They now have shops in Canton and Bloomington, as well, and provide free mobile service within a 40 mile radius of their three locations. They are a family-owned small business that strives to take care of your auto glass needs with excellence and integrity. Whether you have a rock chip or a broken windshield, door glass, or back glass, the technicians at Windshield Specialists treat your car as they would their own.

The owners, Mark and Laura Bryant, and their staff are excited to be a part of the Canton community and to have the opportunity to help you with your auto glass needs. They are located at 201 E. Elm St. across from Billy's Tap.



201 E. Elm Street, Canton
www.windshielspecialistsil.com
 (309) 649-1550



WELCOME NEW MEMBER: PETER STARANKO - COMCAST BUSINESS



Peter Staranko joined Comcast Business in March of 2021, where he has been happy to provide white-glove service to the Canton Area business owners for Business Internet, Dedicated Internet Access, Phone, Phone Systems, and Monitoring Services. In other words, Peter provides a partnered approach based on finding the best solution for businesses to run more efficiently.

Peter joined Comcast Business because he believes that the number one way to do business is to be in business for yourself. The best way, Peter felt, to serve his community was by becoming a resource for members that own businesses. Comcast Business provides companies with another set of eyes to make their life easier and to share best practices from businesses that share the same challenges.

Peter Staranko is MEF Certified.

(309) 966-6044 | peter_staranko@comcast.com

MEMBER ON THE MOVE: BIG CAT'S BOWLS

Big Cat's Bowls is excited to announce that their second location is officially open for business! Located in the Graham Medical Clinic in Canton, this location expands Big Cat's Bowls' primary operation at 51 N. Second Avenue by offering the same delicious lunch menu, but now adding breakfast bowls.

These breakfast bowls include scrambled eggs with a choice of meat: ham, sausage or bacon, with toppings of cheese, onion, spinach, sweet peppers, and tomatoes. This new location will be open from 7:30a.m. to 2:00p.m. every Monday through Friday.



Go ahead and swing by their new location to grab a meal or two, and be sure to follow them on Facebook (@bigcatsbowls) to stay in the loop!



Big Cat's Bowls - Graham Clinic Location

180 S. Main Street
Canton, IL 61520

(309) 647-0744 | www.bigcatsbowls.com

CONGRATS TO THE GRADUATING SENIORS OF THE CHAMBER'S YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Addison Allard
Allison Roos
Bailey Culver

Claire Mason
Elizabeth Rosich
Faith Demler

Isabella Kees
Jade Wells
Katie Giacabazi

Olivia Emmons
Sada Eveland
Sam Mason

Andrew Quick
Ethan Long
Claire Wheelwright

Canton Area Chamber of Commerce is preparing our high school students for the workforce and providing them with a mentor program opportunity! Offering workshops that cover real world business practices, job skills and soft skills through a partnership with Spoon River College Outreach.

There are two ways you can get involved with this amazing program:



Become a Sponsor. There are several workshops throughout the school year that the students and mentors attend. Before the workshop begins, we provide a lunch for both the students and mentors, which is a great time for them to connect. We are in need of sponsors to help cover the costs of the lunches that are provided. Contact the Chamber office for more details.

Become a Mentor. If you are interested in becoming a mentor to a student in the Youth Leadership Academy, visit www.cantonillinois.org. Click on the Chamber tab, then Annual Chamber Events and scroll down to Youth Leadership Academy. There you will find a Mentor application. Or contact the Canton Chamber to get more information.

Thanks to all the golf teams who participated in the Chamber Golf Outing!

And congrats to the winning team:
Town & Country Insurance Agency!



Cody Schall, Bill Bequeaith, Scott Phegley, Stephen Clark



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 CHAMBER GOLF OUTING SPONSORS!

Major Sponsors



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Davis & Campbell, LLC
Davis Ford & Davis GMC
Edward Jones - Greg Glomb

G-M Mechanical
Hocker, Fitzjarrald, & Richardson
Holthaus Companies
Jim Maloof - Michaeline Harrison
Jimmy John's of Canton
John McCarthy - Attorney at Law
Lance Moring - Country Companies
Michelob Ultra
MidAmerica National Bank
Mid Century Fiber

Monical's Pizza
Pizza Hut
Premier Gutters
Q 98.1FM | 94.1FM BYS
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State Farm - Chuck Taylor
Stinauer Family Dentistry
Taco Bell of Canton
Town & Country Insurance Agency

Prize Sponsors

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American Family Insurance
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Art Hossler Auto Plaza
Big Cat's Bowls
Billy's Tap
Bistro 101
Black Maple Coffee & Espresso
Blessings Primitives
Canton Family YMCA

Canton Park District
CJ Flowers & More
Country Line Bar & Grill
Davis Buick GMC
Di's Boutique
Don & Nancy's Cafe
Eats on the Street
Euclid Beverage
Fuller's Jewelry
Giant Goose Ranch
GM Distributors
Harvester Meat Co.
Hy-Vee Food Stores
Intense Tans
Joe's Place in Norris
Keefer Financial
Lance Moring - Country Financial
Larrilyn Hall - Rodan + Fields
McDonald's of Canton
Monical's Pizza

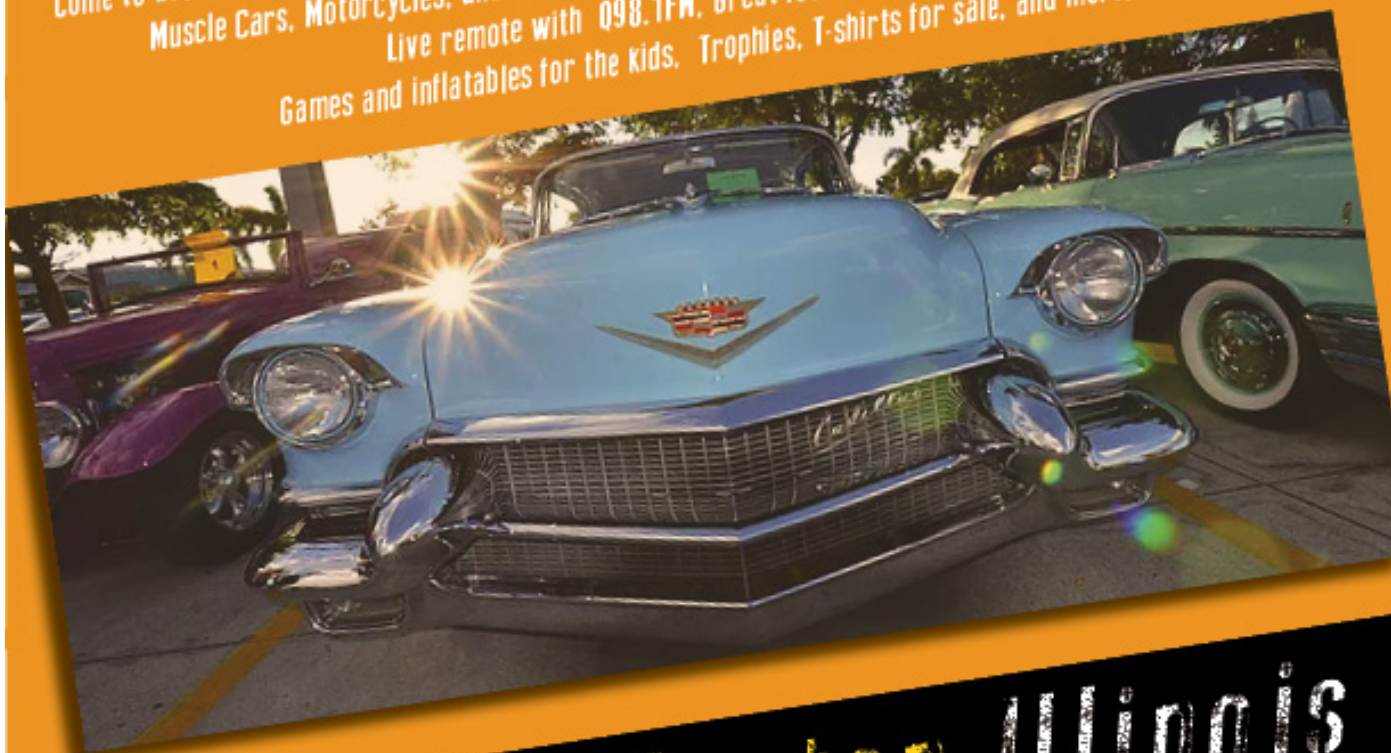
Native Trails Winery
Official Time Out
Pizza Hut of Canton
Princess Creations Cakes
Progressive Vision Center
Q 98.1FM | 94.1FM BYS
Rockstar Beauty & Spa
RP Lumber
SuperWash Car Wash
The Sweet Shoppe
The CBD Store Canton

30th Annual *Canton* CRUISE-IN



Friday June 18, 2021

Come to downtown Canton for a family friendly event filled with Street Rods, Antique Automobiles, Classic Cars, Muscle Cars, Motorcycles, and other collectibles on wheels! Oldies music provided by 3D Sound
Live remote with Q98.1FM. Great food. 50/50 drawing.
Games and inflatables for the kids. Trophies, T-shirts for sale, and more!



Downtown Canton Illinois

Sponsored by



209 East Chestnut Street | Canton, IL 61520 | (309) 647-2677

MESSAGE FROM ROLF SIVERTSEN

Superintendent for CUSD #66

A Fond Farewell

On June 30, 2021 I will officially be joining the ranks of the senior citizens and retire. After 35 years in education I could probably write a best seller book on my experiences. For example, I started out in the mid 1980's when the Mullet was the must have hair doo for both boys and girls and ended it in the midst of a pandemic. What a dynamic experience! However, the best thing about my career is how I have ended it.

I can honestly say, without reservation, the best part of my career has been my tenure in Canton. I have met wonderful people and worked with some of the most dedicated and committed educators I have ever met. Most importantly, without any reservation whatsoever, I can honestly say my successor will be a great superintendent and eclipse and exceed my educational performance.

Taking over as superintendent next year will be Tad DeRenzy. Tad was born in Canton and has lived here his entire life. He is also a graduate of the Canton School District and Spoon River College. Tad's most recent assignment has been as business manager for the school district. During his tenure as business manager he has worked hard to maintain a balanced budget and keep the district in the black while many other districts throughout the state have struggled to do so. He is honest, fair, and has a profound regard for the success of children. I am very excited for Tad and the district.

Tad's replacement will be Jeff Utsinger. The business manager oversees the financial well-being of the district. Most recently Jeff has been principal of Stark County High School. Jeff has recently completed his Superintendents endorsement and is excited to start his new assignment. Jeff recently moved his family within the Canton School District. I am excited for Jeff and his family.

In closing, I would like to thank the community and the board of education for giving me the privilege of leading the district for the past 5 years. My oldest son will be a senior next year at CHS. As a result, my family plans to remain in the area. I have had many people ask me "what's next?" To be honest I don't know. However, one thing is for certain - on June 30th I will be officially retired. Thank you to all the staff and community for a wonderful experience!



THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

A Message from Cole McDaniel

Executive Director for the Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development

There is not just one characteristic that defines a community leader. Community leaders step up to the plate to make a difference, with long term goals of prosperity and better quality of life always in mind. In some models, leadership is a position in a hierarchy. Those at the top of the hierarchy have the power and make the decisions. Community leadership is about developing every person's capacity for leadership, starting with self-leadership and self-responsibility. Those who have positions of leadership must demonstrate principles and practices of good leadership by living the example. So, the community leader does not take the prime parking spot out of a sense of entitlement. There are no special privileges that put community leaders above others who live in the community. Every member of the community has responsibilities and rights. Community leaders walk beside others and listen to them.

A community leader's job is not to take on all the problems of the world themselves and fix everything, but rather to work together with everyone in the community, to mobilize and guide others, to facilitate solutions and think about the long-term health of the community and its people.

I want to say thank you to those community leaders we have here in Canton. It would be difficult to name them all without missing someone by accident, so with that said, you know who you are! With the community and organizational leaders, we have in Canton, we are able to get more accomplished than would ever be possible without them. I encourage everyone to strive to be a community leader, to help guide others, and raise the standard for Canton!



209 E. Chestnut Street
Suite 2B
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(309) 647-2677

Meet the Assistant Director, continued.

One of my more consistent responsibilities is to boost and monitor the Chamber's online presence. This also includes promoting our Chamber Members when we can. One thing I've noticed as I've worked on the Chamber's Facebook page, as well as our weekly Member Minute Newsletter, is that it's much easier for us to promote our members if they have an online presence that is regularly updated. If your business is a Chamber Member, **help me help you!** If you have a Facebook page, keep it updated as regularly as possible. Also, be sure to send us any flyers you have for upcoming events. If you don't have a flyer, but have all the information, I am more than happy to design a flyer for you and your event! It's one of your benefits of being a Chamber Member!

I am excited about the work being done at the Chamber, and I'm looking forward to finding more ways to serve the Canton community. Don't hesitate to stop by our office and say hello! As you see more of me around town, I hope to make more connections and get to know Canton and its residents on a deeper level.



Chamber Exclusive Series

Amazing resources at minimal cost.
Designed to help YOUR business thrive.

Tools for Success

Navigating the New Normal

A Five-Part Webinar Series to Receive Helpful & Practical
Tools to Navigate the New Normal



Amanda Brinkman is the creator, producer and host of the hit series "Small Business Revolution," which was named among Inc. Magazine's top shows for entrepreneurs. Each year the Small Business Revolution revitalizes a different community's "Main Street" through small business makeovers. Every episode they help work to help the entrepreneur with marketing, finance, operations and physical transformations of their space.

Amanda will share the lessons learned in working with small businesses across the country, offering the audience actionable advice on marketing and communication best practices. Often small businesses feel they can't afford the time or fiscal investment in marketing, but Amanda is often quoted saying small businesses can't afford to NOT to invest in marketing. She will share insights of the most important focus areas of your brand and digital footprint, sharing case studies from real businesses featured in the Small Business Revolution series.

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

Amanda Brinkman
Small Business Revolution

★ Webinars \$15 each

Register via the Chamber Website
under our **Calendar of Events**

[www.cantonillinois.chambermaster.com/
events/calendar](http://www.cantonillinois.chambermaster.com/events/calendar)

Thanks to
our sponsor:





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 Canton Family YMCA
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 Giant Goose Ranch
 G-M Mechanical of Canton, Inc.
 Harold Jump
 Helping Hands Resale Shoppe
 Hocker, Fitzjarrald & Richardson, PC CPAs
 Houlthaus Companies, Inc.
 Hulvey Law
 Hy-Vee of Canton
 Ipava State Bank
 Jimmy Johns - Subwars, LLC

The 150% Club is an optional membership upgrade that provides added exposure for your business. By paying an additional 50% of regular membership dues at the time of your renewal or new membership, your business can join the Canton Area Chamber of Commerce's 150% Club.

Meet our

2021 MEMBERS

- John Clark
- John McCarthy - Attorney at Law
- Johnson & Johnson, P.C.
- Jones Surveying & Engineering Corp
- Kevin & Debbie Stephenson
- Kevin Meade
- Kiwanis Club of Canton
- Maurer-Stutz, Inc.
- McDonald's of Canton
- Mel's Sporting Goods
- MidAmerica National Bank
- Mid Century Fiber
- Monical's Pizza
- North Central Behavioral Health Systems
- Oak-Hines Funeral Homes
- Official Time Out
- Otto Stephenitch
- Pizza Hut
- Progressive Vision Center, LTD
- Pure Green, LLC
- Renaissance Care Center
- RK Dixon
- Rhoades Real Estate & Land Auction Services, Inc.
- RISE Canton
- Scott Miller
- Security Finance
- Sedgwick Funeral Homes & Crematory
- Sherwin-Williams
- Spoon River Animal Clinic
- State Farm Insurance - Chuck Taylor
- The CBD Store
- Timbuk Tech, Inc.
- Town & Country Insurance Agency
- Unity Point Clinic of Canton
- Walgreen's of Canton
- Walmart of Canton
- WBYS AM & WCDD FM Radio

HERE AT HOME #2: JOSHUA PICKEL & CORRINNA MARKLAND PICKEL

The Circles of Life: by Carol Davis

It's the circle of life
And it moves us all
Through despair and hope
Through faith and love
'Til we find our place
On the path unwinding
In the circle of life

– Elton John, *The Circle of Life*, from *The Lion King*

Humans, as well as Disney lion cubs, participate in the Circle of Life. Dictionaries define this cycle as a series of stages through which something passes during its lifetime. However, sometimes human life is not comprised of just one big life and death cycle, but a complex web of concentric circles leading us back to where our journeys originally began. That is especially true for this month's Here at Home young professionals Joshua Pickel and Corrinna Markland Pickel.

THE FIRST CIRCLE

Today, Josh Pickel teaches seventh grade science at Ingersoll Middle School. Corrinna works as a mental health clinician at the Canton branch of North Central Behavioral Health Systems. Although choosing different career paths, both Josh and Corrinna assist their clients and students in removing barriers and discover their personal life potentials.

Canton High School English instructor Martha Harr played a major role in Josh's life and eventual career choice. "Mrs. Harr was a big inspiration to me in high school, even before I decided to study education," Josh says. "She encouraged me to be who I was, even if I was a little anti-authoritarian and into counterculture. I was still obviously working it all out in high school, but she saw those pieces of me as valuable pieces that should be allowed to grow. I am grateful for her acceptance and encouragement. I try to be that way in my classroom every day now. I want kids to feel safe to be who they are when they are in my classroom."

For Corrinna, it was her mother, Dinah Markland, who introduced her to the value in social work. "My mom was a single parent and the best role model a young girl could have," says Corrinna. "Mom always thinks about others and instilled that in me at an early age. When I was little, mom worked in soup kitchens and took me along with her. She earned her degree as a non-traditional student and devoted her life to making the world a better place. She still does that every day at the Fulton Mason Crisis Service. And now I do my best to emulate her." Neither Josh nor Corrinna entered their current careers immediately, however. The two traveled in several ever-expanding circles – sometimes together, often apart – before they made their journey home.

THE SECOND CIRCLE – JOSH

Throughout high school, Josh lived at home with his father Dave, his mother Terry, and his sister Emily. Like many students, Josh focused attention on his classes and extra-curricular activities, but current world events also weighed heavily on Josh's mind. By the time he graduated, Josh considered politics as a potential career.



The Circles of Life, Continued

“It was the George W. Bush era and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq started and it kind of became the perfect storm for me getting into politics and the anti-war movement at the time. I was getting into punk rock and the sort of outspoken anti-authoritarian music and literature that shaped the worldview I carry to this day,” Josh says. In the fall of his freshman year, aerial terrorists had felled the Twin Towers, hit the Pentagon, and downed a plane in Pennsylvania.

Josh became close friends with Corrinna Markland. Corrinna and Josh dated other people, but their friendship grew stronger throughout high school. In August 2005, Josh headed to Northern Illinois University where for the next two and a half years, he would switch majors from political science to elementary education, then to visual communications/graphic design for a short period, and eventually back to elementary education.

“I always imagined myself settling in Canton. I enjoyed growing up here,” Josh says. “I have a lot of memories of my dad taking me to high school sports and other community events when he worked for the Canton Daily Ledger, and the enjoyment of those events never really left me. However, I had an itch to see other places and I went away first to NIU to be close to Chicago and to experience what that was like because I had no prior experience living somewhere bigger or that close to a major city. I enjoyed visiting, but I was fairly certain I didn’t want to live there. I just wanted to make sure.”

And so, Josh transferred from Northern to Western Illinois University and by 2010 had earned a B.S. in elementary education with endorsements in middle school social studies, language arts, and science. Throughout this circular phase of Josh’s life, the one constant in his life remained his friendship with Corrinna Markland.

THE SECOND CIRCLE – CORRINNA



After performing in a few Canton High School musicals and with CHS Band instructor Joe Roman’s encouragement, Corrinna, like many talented young women, dreamed of being a Broadway star. “During my junior year, I was in the CHS production of Annie. I had a couple of small roles, but one of them included a solo,” Corrinna says. “Mr. Roman approached me after the performance and asked me to audition for jazz vocalist in jazz band. I was terrified and excited at the same time. Jazz singing was completely foreign to me.”

However, Joe Roman continued to encourage Corrinna to give it a try and she was ultimately selected as jazz vocalist her senior year. “Mr. Roman rehearsed with me, shared his love and knowledge of jazz musicians, and even lent me a keyboard to practice on my own. His support and encouragement fostered confidence. Singing was natural for me and was always my best instrument. But Mr. Roman was instrumental in developing my work ethic for other creative skills which I’ve carried over to many other areas of my life.”

In the fall of 2006, Corrinna entered Illinois Central College attending for the next two years on a performing arts scholarship. Before completing her degree, however, the circle of life moved again, and Corrinna enrolled at Northern Illinois University in the BFA acting program. “I was chasing Josh,” she laughs. “But I didn’t last even a semester and returned home to Spoon River College to complete my associate degree. I still hadn’t discovered what I wanted to do, so at 22, I moved to Springfield to try and figure that out while working at Starbucks using the skills I’d learned working at the Canton Monical’s while in high school.”

THE THIRD CIRCLE

By 2011, Josh Pickel and Corrinna Markland realized that their life circles kept bringing them closer to one another and they both returned to Canton. Friendship had transmuted into love.

The Circles of Life, Continued

Corrinna worked as an event coordinator at Kickapoo Winery. Josh, who had completed his student teaching in the Cuba School District, looked for teaching jobs in the local area while substitute teaching at Canton High School and working part-time at the YMCA. During the 2011-12 school year, Josh contracted with the Lewistown School District to teach fifth grade, but that position ended after one year when grant funding dried up. He then briefly taught fourth grade at District 150's Charter Oak School.

"I realized I needed to grow up myself before teaching others," Josh says. "So, I stopped teaching for eight years. I found interesting employment, such as fixing watches and reading utility meters. And I took some graduate level classes at Western Illinois University, too. But the tug to teach was always there."

Corrinna thinks it was the birth of their daughter, June, in 2014 that changed everything. "We suddenly became a family unit, not just a couple," she says. "I knew I wanted to quit work and go back to school. I also knew it was a big move, a financial drain, and asking a lot of Josh. But Josh just said go."

Ultimately, Corrinna enrolled in the social work program at WIU. She volunteered at the Fulton Mason Crisis Service, Eastside Nazarene Church and the local Salvation Army. Corrinna's studies and encounters with folks in Canton were opening her eyes to the many needs in her own backyard. She discovered numerous social service needs such as homelessness, substance dependence, employment assistance, and access to mental health care. She earned a degree in social work from WIU in May 2017 and immediately began working with Bridgeway in June.

THE FOURTH CIRCLE

When their son Cal was born in 2018, Josh, Corrinna, and family had come full circle. Corrinna began employment at North Central Behavioral Health Systems' Canton branch so she could work in Canton as a mental health clinician. She provides mental health treatment to over 90 individuals ranging from ages 5 to 70. Working in community mental health can be trying and providing psychotherapy for a variety of mental disorders can be exhausting in more ways than one, but it is evident Corrinna enjoys her work.

"Our community is made up of a lot of strong individuals that just need some support. I get to learn from these folks every day," Corrinna says. "And I get to help them learn resiliency and reach goals. I get to help them feel equipped to give back to their own families and community. My hope is that in doing so, I'm a part of something bigger."

When Chad Murphy, Director of Adult Education at Spoon River College, called Josh about an opening in the Adult Education's GED program in 2019, Josh decided it was time to teach again – this time in a new environment – one in which his beliefs, his talents, and his skills would be utilized for the greater good.

Chad Murphy had asked his father, Phil Murphy, what he thought about Josh Pickel. "Without hesitation," Chad says, "My father responded 'Josh is very creative. I think he would be an excellent teacher.' The word creative struck a tone with me. Adult education is different from a traditional classroom. Think one room schoolhouse. It takes someone who is willing to be accessible as a teacher and offer support and encouragement. It takes someone to provide creative lessons and a learning environment where students are encouraged to take charge of their own academic and personal achievement. As I spoke to those who know Josh, I felt that he fit that unique mold. It has proven to be true. And, the longer he is with us, the more success he is having."

When Josh received a call from the principal at Ingersoll Middle School in March of 2020 to be a long-term substitute, Josh interviewed and was hired the next day. However, Josh taught in person for only one day. On the second day, Josh became a remote teacher due to the COVID pandemic. It quickly became evident that his flexible teaching style and visual communication skills from Northern would pay off after all.

"I had always envisioned teaching at Ingersoll Middle School and only Ingersoll," Josh says.

The Circles of Life, Continued

“When I took a few WIU graduate education classes from my former Ingersoll principal, Phil Murphy, and he took us on a tour of Ingersoll Middle School, I acknowledged that the teaching tug was still there. Now I teach for both Ingersoll and Spoon River College’s GED program.”

Today, Josh teaches his students not just facts and data; he encourages them to explore and experiment, while providing a safe environment in which the students can be themselves— something he learned from his former English teacher Martha Harr. “Being wrong is a doorway to learning,” says Josh. “It’s not failure; it’s discovery. A spark that leads to a path.”

Or maybe to a circle. Josh relates a story about a 16-year-old GED student, who had not completed his freshman year at high school, and who did not believe he would be successful in passing his GED exams either. With Josh’s encouragement and guidance, not only did the young student pass, he passed all of them – in only four months.

Corrinna continues in the job she loves but is also working toward a master’s in social work through the University of Illinois. “Ten years from now, I hope to be working as a mental health clinician like I am now. I’m on track to have my MSW completed in the summer of 2022. After that, I hope to obtain my clinical license. I plan to continue living and working in the community that I have called home for most of my life. I’m confident that my children will benefit from the local school district and that my husband will remain an active participant in educating the young minds of our community. I had a good childhood here and I’m most looking forward to my children benefiting from the same opportunities I was afforded.”

In the community at large, Josh recently became involved with the rejuvenated Fulton County Arts Council and serves as its Vice President. Corrinna performs with the Spoon River College Community Chorus. June enjoys dance classes and who knows what the future holds for young Cal.

Josh and Corrinna believe that Canton has tremendous potential to be a great place for people in their age group and younger. “You’re seeing businesses pop up now that are pretty progressive and keep a hip younger crowd in mind,” says Josh. “We have a lot of faith in the people of our generation who have chosen to make Canton their home in their adult life. We’ve got a good group that has a palpable sense of care for this community and what it will become over the next several decades.”

THE NEXT CIRCLE

Current Executive Director of the Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development, Cole McDaniel, himself a young professional who returned to rural Central Illinois, explains how important returning young professionals are to the economic growth of the area he now serves. “I believe that gaining knowledge and perspective on a variety of issues both personally and professionally is so valuable for many young professionals,” McDaniel says. “Personally, I knew the day I left my rural hometown, that I wanted to go out and gain more knowledge and new experiences and bring that back to make a valuable impact in my hometown however I could. As we move into the world of remote work post pandemic, there will be even more opportunity for young professionals to come back to their roots and have the same job opportunities that they could have if they lived elsewhere.”

And the Partnership, as well as the Canton Area Chamber of Commerce, is enticing young professionals to do just that. “The Spoon River Partnership for Economic Development has taken on several initiatives to showcase all of the opportunities in Canton,” McDaniel continues. “Not only to remote workers, but to young professionals who want to come back to Fulton County.”

When they do return, new young professionals will most certainly find Josh and Corrinna Pickel there welcoming them to step through Canton’s open door – no matter how many circular paths they took to get here.