



# HISTORICO

*Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter*

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744, Phone: 217-525-1961,  
e-mail: schsoffice@gmail.com web: [www.sangamonhistory.org](http://www.sangamonhistory.org), [SangamonLink.org](http://SangamonLink.org)

VOLUME 52 NO. 9

SEPTEMBER 2016

## Season Opener: September 20



It's a story faded by time and buried by Mother Nature: a 20,000 acre city that grew up overnight in Illiopolis that today has almost vanished into history.

But it will spring back to life, at least for a few hours, on Tuesday, September 20, when the Sangamon Ordnance Plant gets a never-before-seen multi-media look as the Sangamon Historical Society eyes its impact and

legacy on Sangamon County today.

The program begins at 5:30 p.m. in

**WHERE:** Tri City Library, Buffalo. (Directions, page 5)

**WHEN:** Tues., September 20

**TIME:** 5:30 p.m.

the municipal hall side of the newly built Tri City Library in Buffalo, about

a 22-minute drive east of Springfield. The meeting is open to the public.

The program will include part of a PBS television "Prairie Fire" documentary that included interviews with women who worked at the complex, a powerpoint audio and visual presentation and other material including a detailed scrapbook maintained by the late Claire Pritchett, an Illiopolis resi-

*(Continued on page 5)*

### **INSIDE**

From the President's Desk.....	2
Special Project Winners .....	3
History Makers.....	4
Calendar.....	7

### *Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk October 9*



See story, page 4



## ***Lots to Look Forward to Now and in the Months Ahead***

With the autumn season approaching, we are excited about starting a new year at Sangamon County Historical Society. I am honored to serve as your new President and hope to have a chance to get to know more of our members during the year.

I want to thank the officers, committee chairs, board members and volunteers for agreeing to serve the Society in their respective positions for the coming year. Their commitment and dedication to the mission of preserving and promoting the county's rich history is what keeps the Society going.

In case you missed the Annual Meeting at Island Bay Yacht Club this summer, it was a very special event on beautiful Lake Springfield. Keeping with tradition, the Society president from 10 years ago, Taylor Pensoneau, was our keynote speaker and shared some of his very interesting "insider" experiences as a newspaper reporter covering the state Capitol and its colorful politicians.

\* \* \*

Our program committee, under the leadership of co-chairs Vicky Whitaker and Mary Alice Davis, has been busy during the past few months planning and organizing some great presentations and events that you won't want to miss.

The first program of the year is on Tuesday, September 20 at the new Buffalo Public Library. The multi-media presentation will trace the rise and fall of the sprawling Sangamon Ordinance Plant complex, a city that rose almost overnight on more than 20,000 acres in Illiopolis during World War II...and left its mark on this area even today. It's a program that you won't want to miss, so mark it on your calendar!

We hope to see you at this and other programs throughout the year. Most programs are open to the public so please bring a friend and share our county's history.

\* \* \*

We are proud to bring back our popular Cemetery Walk on Sunday, October 9 at Oak Ridge Cemetery again this year. Last year was the first year it returned since 2008. A wealth of history will be told with this very interesting line up of the county's historical notables buried at the cemetery. Eight actors and actresses will be dressed in period costumes, telling the stories of the person they portray. This is a family friendly event, so be sure to bring the whole family and enjoy some Sangamon County's rich history. You can learn more details starting on page 4.

Thank you to chair Mary Alice Davis and a hard-working committee for bringing this event back this year. Members are encouraged to volunteer for the Cemetery Walk or other special events. Contact our volunteer chair, Jennifer Battles, or other board member to see how you can help.

\* \* \*

The Society offers a number of other benefits to our members. If you are interested in reading about our county's history, you will want to check out our website at [www.sangamonhistory.org](http://www.sangamonhistory.org), where you will find a catalogue of our printed publications on topics ranging from chilli to coal mining to the 1908 Race Riots.

Also learn about local history on [www.sangamonlink.org](http://www.sangamonlink.org). More than 900 articles tell about many facets of Sangamon County history and the people who made it happen. Editor Mike Kienzler has written most of the stories and he invites your comments as well as submissions.

And be sure to like us on Facebook. Social Media Committee Chair Cathy Mosley keeps us up-to-date with current happenings within the Society.

I look forward to seeing you are our next program.



***Historico***, published 10 times a year (except July/August and December), is the official bulletin for members of the Sangamon County Historical Society. ***Winner, Certificate of Excellence, Illinois State Historical Society.***

You can download back issues of ***Historico*** in PDF format by going to our website, [www.sangamohistory.org](http://www.sangamohistory.org) or [sancohis.org](http://sancohis.org). Send event announcements to [historicoeditor@gmail.com](mailto:historicoeditor@gmail.com).

Vicky Whitaker, ***Historico*** Editor, Donna Catlin, ***Photographer***

## Society Awards Special Project Grants to Promote, Preserve Local History

Three county nonprofit organizations have been awarded Special Projects grants from the Sangamon County Historical Society to help preserve and promote local history. The awards, announced at the Society's annual dinner in June, went to the:

**Oak Ridge Cemetery Foundation** - \$1,000 for a bronze plaque bearing the original inscription, "In memory of Abraham Lincoln. . ." The original tablet, behind which Abraham Lincoln's remains were placed in the receiving tomb of the cemetery, has weathered over the years and has become illegible. To preserve the history of the tablet, a new plaque will be placed in front of the slab on the bell tower.

**Williamsville Public Library and Museum** - \$1,000 for a historical marker for the Price-Prather House. The home was built in 1868 by James Price, a well-known breeder of Hereford cattle. In 1877 it was sold to John and Mary Price, who later sold it to their son J.F. Prather, a significant contributor of the local economy and

founder of the Williamsville Bank. The marker will describe the historical significance of the home, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### "An Historic Christmas" -

\$1,000 for a musical program that will tell the story of Christmas as it was celebrated in the 1800s. Past Christmas traditions and practices will be showcased at various historic sites including the Lincoln Home, Edwards Place, Old State Capitol, Elijah Iles House, Dana-Thomas House, Vachel Lindsay Home and the Executive Mansion. The grant will cover the fees for Mr. Lincoln, Mrs. Lincoln, musicians, singers and performers.



**SPECIAL PROJECTS GRANT**  
Chair Elaine Hoff revealed the names of the three winners of the Society's 2016 grant competition. Her announcement was part of the Society's annual dinner at the Island Bay Yacht Club on June 21.

*Donna Catlin photo*



### OFFICERS

**President**.....Ruth Slottag  
**Vice-President**.....Vicky Whitaker  
**Secretary**.....Kathy Dehen  
**Treasurer**.....Jerry Smith  
**Past-President**.....Mary Alice Davis

### DIRECTORS

#### Term Ending 2019

Jennie Battles  
Donna Catlin  
Terri Cameron  
Mary Schaefer  
Elaine Hoff

#### Term Ending 2018

Larry Stone  
Roger Whitaker  
Sue Massie  
Carol Phillips

#### Term Ending 2017

Troy Gilmore  
Doug Polite  
Sue Helm  
Eugene Walker  
Cathy Mosley

### Committee Chairs

**Legal:** Bruce Beeman  
**Finance:** Patricia Davis, Doug Polite,  
**Nominating:** Mary Alice Davis  
**Hospitality:** Marion Leach  
**Publicity and Marketing:** Ruth Slottag, Sue-Helm  
**Publications:** Roger Whitaker  
**Programs & Special Events:** Mary Alice Davis, Vicky Whitaker  
**Social Media Chair:** Cathy Mosley  
**Special Projects:** Elaine Hoff

### Staff

Mike Kienzler, [SangamonLink.org](http://SangamonLink.org) Editor

## SEPTEMBER 2016 MEMBERSHIP/DONOR REPORT

**The Society welcomes new members:** Mary & Don Schaefer, Thomas Green, Carol Phillips, Patricia McDonald Warren, Christi Sarff.

**...And extends its thanks to the following donors:** Frances Armstrong, R-Lou Barker, Daniel Monroe Barringer, Jennie Battles, Bruce & Joan Beeman, Sandra Bellatti, Veronica & James Betts, Elaine Birtch, Lawrence & Connie Locher Bussard, Sally Cadigan, Donna & Carl Catlin, Cathy Caughlin, Pamm Collebrusco, James & Anne Cornelius, Mary Alice Davis, Robert & Patricia Davis, Kathy Dehen, Laura Demick, Joseph & Rebecca Dombrowski, Claire Eberle, David & Laurie Farrell, Barbara Ferrara, Barbara Farris, Farrell & Ann Gay, Thomas Green, Richard & Ann Hart, Susan Hammond, Dr. Mark & Jackie Hansen (*in memory of Floyd Barringer*), Richard & Carol Herndon, Elaine Hoff, Brenda June Holmes, William Howarth, Sara Iaiennaro, Jacqueline Jackson, Patrick & Janice Joyce, Jack & Penny Wollan-Kriel, Gary & Evelyn Lazar, Doris J. Leonard, Sue Massie, Mary Marada, Richard McLane, RL & Carolyn Moore, Margaret Oswald, Hal & Mary Perkins, Dr. Virgilio & Elena Pilapil, Rosalie & Doug Polite, Theresa Power, Doris Prather, Mary Paxton, Marlene Rinehart, William & Patricia Rudolph, Edward Russo, Ruth & Ernie Slottag, Joe & Mary Lou Schroder, Francie & Jan Staggs, Larry Stone, Ron & Ann Tucker, Kim Villanueva, Richard Walton, Roger & Vicky Whitaker, Thomas Yokley, and Dr. Elvin & Sharon Zook.

Please make note of our official mailing address:

**SCHS**  
**Box 9744**  
**Springfield, Illinois,**  
**62791-9744**

## HISTORY MAKERS

SCHS members generate history every day. This new *Historico* feature details their achievements. We welcome your input. Send member news items and photos to [historicoeditor@gmail.com](mailto:historicoeditor@gmail.com).

Hats off to member **Katie Spindell** who received a Legends of Tourism Award from the Visit Springfield/Springfield Commission on International Visitors in ceremonies at the Abraham Presidential Museum marking National Travel and Tourism Week. Spindell won the Legendary Event award that recognized her work in coordinating the 2015 Lincoln Funeral Train Coalition.



\*\*\*

Life member Carl Catlin has been presented with the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, one of the most prestigious awards issued by the Federal Aviation Agency to pilots with at least 50 years of piloting aircraft with professionalism, skill, accident free, and aviation expertise. Catlin, a former military and commercial pilot, has been a corporate pilot flying for Dick Levi, Levi, Ray and Shoup in Springfield since 2001.



\*\*\*

Multi-talented member **Roni Betts** is not only a re-enactor of historic figures like Rebecca Woods who she portrayed in last year's Oak Ridge Cemetery walk. (see photo at right). Betts is also a prize-winning artist whose quilling skills will be on display at the Hoogland Center for the Arts in Springfield in a show that runs from September 20 through October 6. Quilling—or paper rolling—is an ancient art form that has bridged civilizations, centuries, and continents. Early American settlers used the technique to create and adorn decorative items in the home.

## Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk October 9

# Popular Society Event Returns With New Tales Of Life and Death in Early Sangamon County

The Sangamon County Historical Society will again sponsor the popular cemetery walking tour next month.

*"Echoes of Yesteryear: A Walk through Oak Ridge Cemetery"* will be held from Noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, October 9 at Oak Ridge Cemetery, 1441 Monument Avenue in Springfield. (The last tour begins at 3:15 p.m.). The rain date is Sunday, October 16.

The free event will be in place of the Society's regularly scheduled monthly program meeting on the third Tuesday of the month. The regular meeting schedule will resume in November.

"The walk will provide our members, their guests and the general public with a glimpse into the history and heritage of Springfield," said Mary Alice Davis, chair of the Society's Cemetery Walk Committee who last year spearheaded the successful return of the Society's cemetery walks. The walk was held annually for 12 years beginning in 1996 and ending in 2008, drawing thousands of visitors. Last year was no exception but this year there will be even more to do and see.

For the October 2016 walk, co-sponsored by Oak

Ridge Cemetery, participants will see and hear actors and actresses in period costumes tell the stories of eight individuals who were instrumental in the development of our community and who have been buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery. These authentic stories,



SCHS member Roni Betts was among the re-enactors portraying famous residents from the past buried at Oak Ridge.

band Joe Knox, came to Illinois in 1847. She had seven children including a son William Donegan, who was murdered during the 1908 Race Riots of Springfield. This action led to the formation of the NAACP. **John Williams** (1808-1880), began his career as a store clerk for Major Elijah Iles. He was appointed Commissary-General with the rank of Colonel for the State of Illinois in 1861 by President Lincoln. Also he was a founding member of the First National Bank of Springfield and was the namesake of Williamsville and Williams Boulevard in Springfield.

which have been thoroughly researched, will take the audience back to an earlier time and provide insight into their lives and times. On the tour you'll meet and listen to:

**Clara Irwin** (1815-1911), wife of businessman Robert Irwin who built the home now known as the Elijah Iles House. Clara took much pride in their garden, especially strawberries and fruit trees, which she proudly served to guests. Robert operated a store and founded the area's first bank and insurance company.

**Leanna Donegan Knox** (1797-1876), a free woman of color, who with her hus-

band Joe Knox, came to Illinois in 1847. She had seven children including a son William Donegan, who was murdered during the 1908 Race Riots of Springfield. This action led to the formation of the NAACP.

**John Williams** (1808-1880), began his career as a

store clerk for Major Elijah Iles. He was appointed Commissary-General with the rank of Colonel for the State of Illinois in 1861 by President Lincoln. Also he was a founding member of the First National Bank of Springfield and was the namesake of Williamsville and Williams Boulevard in Springfield.

**Reverend Francis Springer** (1810-1892), founder of the first local Lutheran worship services in Springfield and first City Superintendent of Schools. He also was president of Illinois State University (which later became Carthage College), Chaplain of the U.S. Army in the Civil War, and was instrumental in establishing the Home of the Friendless in Springfield.

He also was president of Illinois State University (which later became Carthage College), Chaplain of the U.S. Army in the Civil War, and was instrumental in establishing the Home of the Friendless in Springfield.

(Continued on page 6)

## Sangamon Ordnance Plant Gets Another Look

# SCHS Multi-Media Presentation at Tri-City Library

*Continued from page 1)*

resident who donated her unique compilation to the Illiopolis-Ninantic Library. The Library owns one of the area's largest collections of information and materials about the ordnance plant.

"The sprawling World War II bomb-making complex stretched across one of the most fertile areas of Central Illinois, forcing Illiopolis farmers and homeowners from their homes on 30 days notice in 1942 so that the complex could be built and operational a year later. Many of the 10,000 or so workers there until the war ended in 1945 were our grandfathers and grandmothers, fathers and mothers, in fact, whole family members whose lives and those of their future offspring were changed forever," notes SCHS program co-chair Mary Alice Davis, whose own father was among the Sangamon Ordnance Plant labor force.

"It was dangerous work under difficult times and in the long run changed community attitudes and practices that are with us to this day. Nature and time have all but buried the landscape that was the Sangamon Ordnance Plant. We think it is time for a renewed view," Davis said.

From 1942 to 1945, the Sangamon Ordnance Plant produced 24 million artillery shells, 10 million 90mm anti-tank rounds and more than 100 million artillery and bomb fuses and boosters.

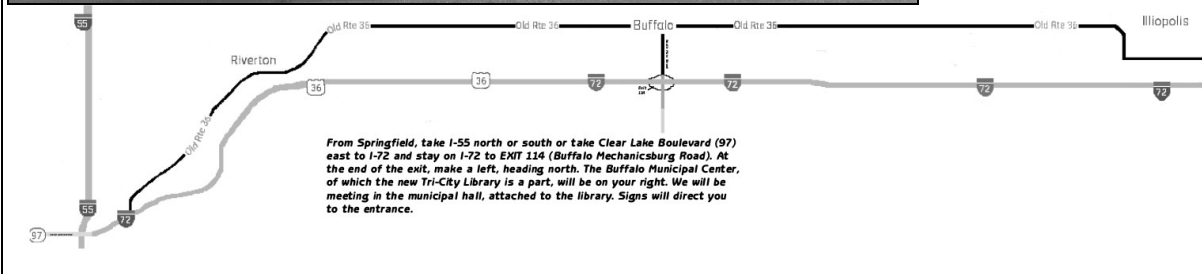
A workforce that approached 10,000 people at its peak also helped pull the Springfield and Decatur areas out of economic doldrums created by the Great Depression and the long-term decline of coal mining. More than 60 percent of those employees were many of whom were working outside their

ated by Remington Rand. In 1943, the two plants merged, keeping the name Sangamon Ordnance Plant and under sole management by Remington Rand. The project, made public in February 1942, became fully operational by March 1943. The influx of construction workers kicked off a housing



**FIRST LOOK:** The new Tri-City Public Library, headed by SCHS member Chet Brandt, opened in June to serve the communities of Buffalo, Dawson and Mechanicsburg and will be hosting the Society's September meeting. Staff from the Illiopolis-Niantic Library will be on hand too, to share some of the institution's material on the Sangamon Ordnance Plant.

*Donna Catlin photo*



**The new Tri-City Library in Buffalo is about a 22 minute drive from Springfield, via Route 72. Take exit 114 and turn left onto Buffalo Mechanicsburg Road (the Tri-City Library will be on your right, part of the Municipal complex.**

homes for the first time in their lives, noted editor Mike Kienzler, in a recent article about the plant on the Sangamon County Historical Society's online and searchable encyclopedia of Sangamon County history, [www.SangamonLink.org](http://www.SangamonLink.org). Kienzler will be among the presenters at the meeting.

The plant originally was built as two separate operations. one north of U.S. 36 (the Oak Ordnance Plant — sometimes also called the Midland plant — operated by Johnson & Johnson) and Sangamon Ordnance Plant, on the south side of the highway, oper-

shortage in nearby communities, a situation that continued until the war ended, Kienzler noted.

Thousands of other workers commuted from their homes, many by bus or auto, but most on special trains running on the old Interurban line, which paralleled U.S. 36 and the Wabash Railroad between Springfield and Decatur, using 55 retired and remodeled wooden passenger cars from the New York City transit system.

The Sangamon Ordnance Plant site was surrounded by barbed-wire fences, the perimeter patrolled by a 600 member force of plant security officers in cars and on horseback.



ON THEIR WAY: Participants in last year's cemetery walk head for one of the stops along the route. *Donna Catlin photo*

## Society's 2016 Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk Coming Up

*(Continued from page 4)*

**Rosa Kun Keydell** (1827-1911), wife of Andrew Kun, who operated Reisch Brewery in 1853. After his death Rosa married Robert Randolph, then Moritz Keydell, both of whom continued operating the brewery until a family dispute forced the buildings to be sold at public auction.

**Mattie Lightfoot** (1857-1920) At seven years old, she and three siblings along with a boatload of other civil war orphans were transported from Arkansas to Springfield by Rev. Francis Springer. The cruel treatment she endured while working as a servant for a New Berlin physician and his wife is

reflected in her writing of "The Hardships of an Orphant Girl."

**Henry Owsley** (1755-1811), a Revolutionary War veteran who owned a large plantation in Kentucky, where he died. His granddaughter Ella had his remains moved to Oak Ridge near many other family members.

**Moses Broadwell** (1764-1827), a Revolutionary War veteran who settled in Sangamon County near Pleasant Plains in 1820. He purchased nearly 2,000 acres of land and with his son John built Broadwell Inn, which is now the Clayville Historic Site.

Attendees will be transported by bus to the first grave site, then walk to the other gravesites before boarding

the bus to return them down the hill.

The walk is approximately 1.75 miles and will take about two hours to complete.

In addition to the walk, attendees will be able to purchase books published by the Society. The Prairie Aires, an all-woman Dulcimer group, will perform throughout the afternoon.

Refreshments will be available for purchase. Although the event is free to the public, donations are suggested. Parking will be available in designated areas of the cemetery.

For more information about the event go to the Society's website, [www.sangamonhistory.org](http://www.sangamonhistory.org) or call 217-525-1961.



WITH A LAKE SPRINGFIELD WATERVIEW as a backdrop, nearly 100 members of the Sangamon County Historical Society dined on the patio at the Island Bay Yacht Club on June 21, gathering to mark the Society's Annual Dinner. Well-known author Taylor Pensoneau (upper right), a past president, was the keynote speaker. Upper left, outgoing president Mary Alice Davis (right) congratulates incoming president Ruth Slottag. Davis (right) was presented with a certificate of appreciation that also announced that the Society would name one of its Special Projects Grants in her honor. *Donna Catlin photos*

## Calendar of Historical Events

**Friday, September 9, *Wright Concepts Tour***, Dana-Thomas House State Historic Site, 301 E. Lawrence St., Springfield, 10:15 a.m. - 12:15pm and 1:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. Frank Lloyd Wright fans, or fans of amazing architecture in general, will love a new specialty tour being offered for a limited time. The "Wright Concepts" tour features longtime Dana-Thomas Home docent Larry Betz, explaining Wright's principles of architectural design and taking visitors through the unique home. For more information, visit [www.dana-thomas.org](http://www.dana-thomas.org).

**Saturday, September 17 and Sunday, September 18, *Clayville Fall Festival***. 9 a.m.- 6 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. Admission, \$5 adults, \$3 children 7-12,

six and under free. Pioneer artisan and craftsman demonstrations, historic building tours, kid's activities, food and refreshments. Enjoy period music and audience participation with entertainment throughout the weekend in a restored pioneer village off Route 125, Pleasant Plains.

**Sunday, September 18, 2 p.m. - 3 p.m. *Poets in the Parlor (Adam Clay and Matt Hart)***, Lindsay Home State Historic Site, 603 S 6th St, Springfield. Author and poet Clay's works have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Boston Review*, *Iowa Review*, *The Pinch*, and elsewhere. A co-editor of *TYPO Magazine*, he serves as a Book Review Editor for *Kenyon Review* and teaches at the Univer-

sity of Illinois Springfield. Hart is the author of six books of poems. A co-founder and the editor-in-chief of *Forklift, Ohio: A Journal of Poetry, Cooking & Light Industrial Safety*, he lives in Cincinnati where he is Associate Professor in Creative Writing and the Chair of the Department of Liberal Arts at the Art Academy of Cincinnati.

**Tuesday, September 20, 5:30 p.m.** Sangamon County Historical Society Fall Program Opener: ***The Sangamon Ordnance Plant, Its Impact and Legacy***, 5:30 p.m., Tri-City Library, 600 South Main Street, Buffalo. Free. For details, see page 1.

**Sunday, October 9, Noon- 4 p.m.** Sangamon County Historical Soci-

ety ***Oak Ridge Cemetery Walk***, Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield. Free. See page 4 for details.

**Tuesday, November 15, 5:30 p.m.** Internationally celebrated author ***Vince Speranza***, the Battle of the Bulge 101st Airborne Division Machine Gunner immortalized for his actions in Belgium during World War II, shares his experiences with members and guests of the Sangamon County Historical Society in this post-Veterans Day Salute. Speranza, an Auburn resident, turned his memoirs into a widely read book, "*Nuts*," that ushered in a new career as a lecturer and first-hand military historian. Free and open to the public. Carnegie Room, City of Springfield Library.

**Sangamon County Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 9744,  
Springfield, IL 62791-9744  
*Return Service Requested*

Non-profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 777  
Springfield, Illinois

**Sangamon County Historical Society MEMBERSHIP/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Form**

Mail this form with your check to the Sangamon County Historical Society, Box 9744, Springfield, IL 62791-9744. You may also join or renew on line by going to [sangamonhistory.org](http://sangamonhistory.org). Our membership year runs from June 1 to May 31.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Status**

New Member

Renewal

Gift of Membership from:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Levels**

- 01 - Regular Membership - \$25
- 02 - Not-For-Profit Membership - \$20 (Must show proof of status).
- 03 - Student Membership - \$10 (Must show proof of status).
- 04 - Educator, \$15 (Must show proof of status).
- 05 - Pioneer Level Membership - \$100
- 06 - Settlers Level Membership - \$250
- 07 - Trailblazer Level Membership - \$500
- 08 - Lifetime Membership - \$700