



HISTORICO

Sangamon County Historical Society Newsletter

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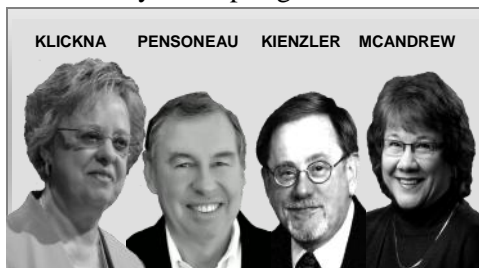
The "Ah-Ha" Moments and More, January 21:

Writers to Share Stories Behind the Stories

Researching and writing about local history isn't for the faint-hearted. And digging into history can sometimes bring surprising results: backstories, funny facts and a myriad of other information that sometimes doesn't make it into print...*or does it?*

A team of well-known local writers will share their surprises and more with Society members and guests on Tuesday, January 21 when they gather to discuss...and maybe reveal...some of the more unusual, humorous, and perhaps scandalous historical facts and myth-busters they've discovered as they've plowed through old records, dusty photos or conducted face-to-face

interviews. What they've found and how they've dealt with it will be the focus of the Society's January program meeting, 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room North at the City of Springfield's Lincoln



Library. The session is free and open to the public.

The four--Mike Kienzler, Taylor Pensoneau, Cinda Ackerman Klickna, and Tara McClellan McAndrew--are familiar to area history buffs and are all Society members.

After almost 40 years as an editor and reporter for *The State Journal-Register*, Kienzler retired in 2013 to become the founding editor of *SangamonLink.org*, the Sangamon County Historical Society's prize-winning online and searchable encyclopedia of Sangamon County history.

A Springfield native, Kienzler is a graduate of Bradley University and received his master's degree in Public

(Continued on page 7)

SCHS Trivia Night Tickets Now Available On Line and By Mail

Ready to play trivia? Individual seat and table reservation purchases are now available online or by mail for the Society's Eighth Annual Trivia Night fundraiser set for Saturday, March 21 in Parish Hall at Christ the King Church. Springfield

Table-purchasing early birds have a sign-up incentive: one or more of 12 reserved up-front

Tables of 10 are \$100. Individual seats are \$10. You can purchase both on line following the link on the Society's website, sangamonhistory.org, home page or by mail by downloading a mail-in form from the site. The mail-in order form will also appear *Historico* in February and March.

Round sponsorships are also

available at \$100. For information about Round sponsorships, contact the Society at sangamonhistory@gmail.com or call 217-525-1961.

With questions and categories devised by Trivia Night guru Al Gietl, tables will be vying for a \$200 first prize with second and third prizes of \$100 and \$75 to the runners up. Emmy award-winning public

television *Illinois Stories* host and producer Mark McDonald will emcee the evening's event.

Doors open at 6 p.m., with the game starting at 7 p.m. Food and drinks will be available for purchase.

Proceeds from the SCHS Trivia Night benefit the Society's Special Projects Fund that underwrites local historic preservation and education projects.

INSIDE:

From the President's Desk.....	2
Oral Historian's Riveting Program.....	3
Bad Weather Advisory.....	3
Society Captures the Holiday Spirit.....	4-5
Calendar of Events.....	7



**Sangamon Experience
Readies Debut.....6**



About Those 2019 New Year Resolutions

We don't need a new list of New Year's resolutions. It's hard enough keeping up with the ones we made in 2019, but let's take a look. Last January we vowed to change the way we connect with you on line, expand our leadership base and continue to work on long-range programming. I'm happy to say that we've made great strides in each area and in 2020 will continue to do so.

Over the summer we stopped using a web-based member management service whose projected five-figure cost and inflexibility to our needs as well as the universal concern about internet data breaches were not in the best long-term interest of the Society. Because the board made the decision not to renew well in advance of the end of our contract this past August, we had the time, skills and manpower to build the new website you see today on *sangamonhistory.org*, adding new features (including one area--*Books & More*--still under construction. We're in the process of downloading all our publications and making them free and easily accessible. It's a long process, but the first group will debut this spring). The site better reflects what we do and who we are.

The decision also gives us room to grow in new directions. By taking back management of our website, we were also able to take our membership data completely off the internet and build a secure system off-line with limited access to the data it contains. As a matter of policy, we do not share our list with other organizations.

At our summer board meeting, we began a system of setting up short term "action committees" to pursue specific projects that have been subject to discussion over the past year or years, among them developing an estate planning guide, youth and education outreach, new fundraising events, and membership development and benefits. These are works in progress, some moving faster than others, but all geared to not only growing and strengthening what we have, but also to incorporate members of the Society not yet actively engaged at the board level to participate in planning and developing what the Society will look like as it heads into the next decade. We again invite each of you to step up and assist us with your input, time, and energy.

We continue to make strides in long-range planning (although if you look at this issue's calendar on page 7, you

might find it hard to believe that)! This is a tight issue, editorially, and we didn't want to get too ahead of ourselves in detailing coming programs, but some blockbusters are in the works. You'll hear more about them next month.

The one event you may want to move on is Trivia Night on March 21. It sounds far away but the fact is it's one of those activities in which it pays to be an early bird. That's why you can now order a table, some individual seats or find out about sponsoring a round, on-line or by mail, by going to *sangamonhistory.org*. There's a link on the home page that will give you all the information you need to know.

In retrospect, maybe the results of our resolution efforts in 2019 weren't that bad. We've definitely made progress since last January and will continue to do so in 2020. Now that's a New Year's resolution!

We wanted to make note of the passing of one of our long-time members, Phyllis Herndon Brissenden, who for several years took care of selling our publications and related material at program meetings and special events and



was a familiar face at most of our recent gatherings. Phyllis, who died December 17 at age 86, was the daughter of Obed Lewis Herndon and Marian Matheny Herndon and the widow of Walter D. Brissenden who died in 1986. A graduate of Sweet Briar College, Virginia, she was queen of the Springfield Art Association's annual Beaux Arts Ball in 1954. Her life-long love of music and nature was reflected in her involvement as a Springfield Symphony Orchestra board member, a post she continued when it morphed into the Illinois Symphony Orchestra where she was made a life trustee, a designation also given to her by the Opera Theatre of St. Louis National Patrons Committee. She was also a member of the National Council of the Metropolitan Opera of New York, the Illinois Audubon Society and the Adams Wildlife Sanctuary in Springfield among other community organizations.

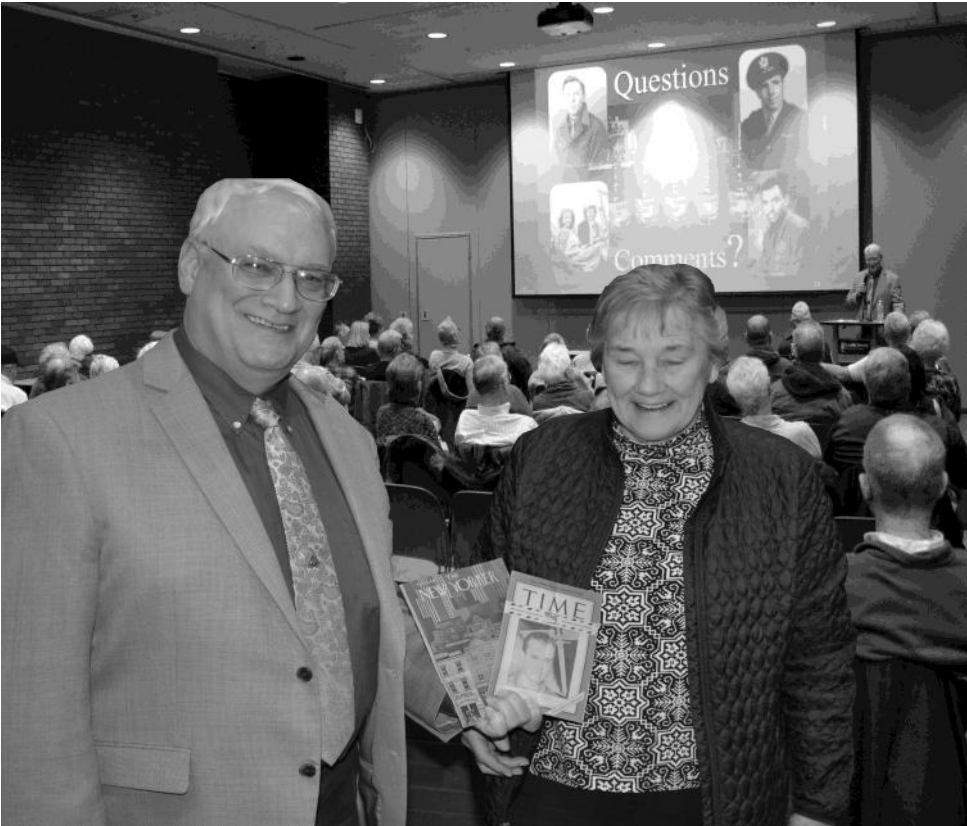
Vicky Whitaker



Historico, published 10 times a year (except July & 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.sangamonhistory.org or sancohis.org. Send event announcements to historicoeditor@gmail.com.

Vicky Whitaker, *Historico* Editor, Photos by Kathy Dehen, Larry Stone



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Mike Kienzler, *SangamonLink.org* Editor

SHARED HISTORY: Society members and guests filled Carnegie Room North at Springfield's Lincoln Library on November 19 for a riveting post-Veteran's Day salute from oral historian Mark DePue who shared photos and experiences interviewing veterans of World Wars I and II, Korea, Viet Nam, the Cold War, Gulf War and War on Terrorism for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's Oral History Program's *Veterans Remember* series. DePue has headed the program since 2006. Following the session, Nancy Chapin (right), a past president of the Society, presented DePue with overseas editions of the *New Yorker* and *Time*, sent weekly to servicemen subscribers during World War II. Preserved by her late husband, Chick Chapin, the magazines carried no advertising.

Bad Weather What If? Here's the Society Policy:

It's January. Did someone say ice and snow? Probably a local forecaster. If weather conditions warrant it, the Society will cancel a meeting or special event and hopefully reschedule it. Such is the nature of the wilds of winter. A cancellation notice will be posted no later than 3 p.m. on the day of the meeting/event several different ways:

- * on our website, *sangamonhistory.org*
- * on our phone, 217-525-1961.
- * radio and television outlets that normally announce weather cancellation notices.

JANUARY 2020 MEMBERSHIP & DONOR REPORT

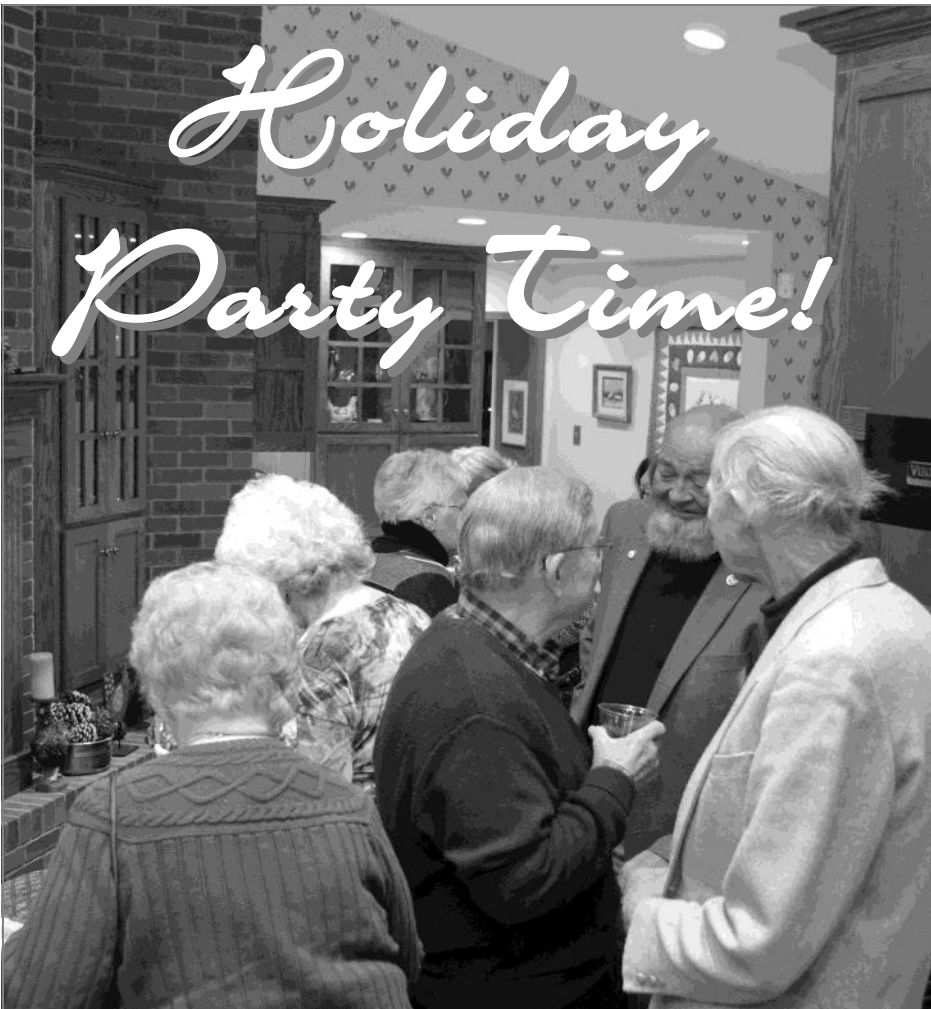


The Society is pleased to welcome new members Leslie Gumm, James Gumm, Brian White, James Vespa, and Amy Budginer And extends its thanks to Mary Blume for her generous donation.

Please make note of our official mailing address:

SCHS
Box 9744
Springfield, Illinois,
62791-9744

Holiday Party Time!

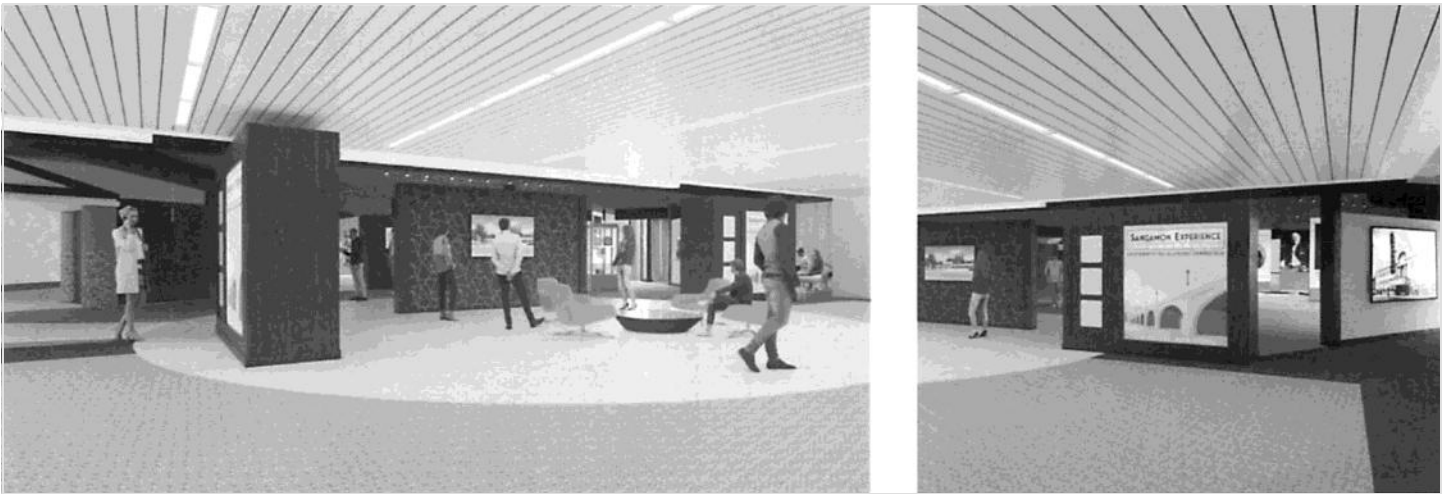


SOCIETY MEMBERS and guests gathered for the annual Holiday Party on December 10, a social evening of conversation, delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts. Held at the home of Roger and Vicky Whitaker, the gathering provided a break from the usual meeting routine and the pre-holiday rush. Above, Mary Schaefer (left), chats with former board member Les Estep and his fiancé, Sara Lieber. Below left, Vicky Whitaker, Jerry Smith and Mary Alice Davis arrange some of the food platters. Below, Ernie and Ruth Slottag sample the fare. Opposite page, upper left, Marlene Rinehart, Brynn Henderson and Laura Demick chat. Upper right, Ronni Betts and husband Jimmy, sample the treats as does Sue Massie (at right).





Sangamon Experience Opening January 30



ARCHITECT'S rendering of the new exhibition and innovative research area at the University of Illinois in Springfield that will focus on the history of the Sangamon region with an accent on technology to spread knowledge of the area's rich history.

Reserve a Spot by January 22 for Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society are expected to join representatives of history organizations and educators from across the region on Thursday, January 30 when the University of Illinois at Springfield holds a grand opening for its new *Sangamon Experience* history center on the first floor of its Public Affairs Center.

The project includes interpretive exhibit space, a website and ongoing digital operations, projected partnerships with local communities and groups including the Society and a student-centered laboratory for innovative public history. Its creation was made possible by a private grant that includes an endowment to underwrite its continued operation and growth.

The grand opening will be held at the site from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. UIS Chancellor Susan J. Koch will handle the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Reservations are required and must be made by January 22 either by phone at 217-206-6058 or online at <https://forms.uofi.uis.edu/sec/3259339>.

In speaking to representatives of history organizations last month, Devin Hunter, assistant professor of history and lead for the project, emphasized that the goal is to make the *Sangamon Experience* a collaborative

project by working with area historical societies, groups, museums, and others interested in Sangamon Valley's stories. Housed in a 5,300 square foot area between the University book store and a new Center for Lincoln Studies, the complex was designed

signed by FWAI Architects of Springfield and includes a student centered laboratory, displays, interactive media and programs that showcase audio and visual materials culled from oral histories, archives, and other resources to help visitors

form their own sense of local history.

In December, Dr. Hunter, a Society



member, met with a cross-section of history organizations as part of an ongoing dialogue that is helping shape the new center. He briefly alluded to plans for the center when he spoke to the Society about the UIS "History Harvest" last April, part of a nationwide on-going effort to photograph and digitize history-related artifacts owned by the public that otherwise would be lost or forgotten.

The University of Illinois Springfield Public Affairs Center (above) is located at 2200 Ernest Hemingway Drive and is connected to Sangamon Auditorium on the south and Brookens Library on the north.

Panel to Share Stories Behind the Stories

(Continued from page 1)

Affairs Reporting from what was then Sangamon State University. He was inducted into the PAR Hall of Fame in 2017. A former president of the old Clayville Folk Arts Guild and a former member of the Illinois State Historical Society advisory board, and he currently is on the board of directors of the Menard County Historical Society.

A native of Bellville, for more than two decades, Pensoneau, a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, covered Illinois politics for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* before switching careers and spending 26 years with the Illinois Coal Association.

After retiring from its presidency in 2003, he returned to writing, this time as author of several highly-praised non-fiction books including two on former Illinois governors: *Dan Walker, the Glory and the Tragedy* and *Governor Richard Ogilvie: In the Interest of the State*. He also wrote a book about State Senator W. Russell Arlington, *Powerhouse: Arlington from Illinois*.

Pensoneau didn't confine all of his research to politics. His book, *Brothers*

Notorious: The Sheltons, documented the exploits of a group of downstate Illinois gangsters and *Dapper & Deadly: The True Story of Black Charlie Harris*, chronicled the life of one of the last famous gangsters from southern Illinois. He also produced two works of fiction, *The Summer of 50* and *Falling Star*. Pensoneau served as president of the Sangamon County Historical Society from 2006 to 2007 and was the keynote speaker at the Society's annual dinner in 2016.

A freelance writer for more than 20 years, McAndrew, who holds a bachelor's degree in English and a masters in Public Affairs Reporting, has worked in a variety of media. She has covered Illinois state government for *National Public Radio* and helped produce pieces for the *BBC*, *Soundprint* and the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*.

Her articles have been printed in dozens of magazines and newspapers including *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, *Illinois Issues*, *Christian Parenting Today*, and *Odyssey*. McAndrew has also written five full-length plays and one-act scripts, several of which were commis-

sioned by local historical sites or agencies. She has spent the last 10 years specializing in writing about history, especially that of Central Illinois and Abraham Lincoln.

Klickna, a free-lance writer whose work frequently appears in *Illinois Times*, holds a bachelor's degree in English Education from the University of Illinois, Urbana, and a Master's in Literature from the University of Illinois, Springfield. She taught English in the Springfield School district for many years and held several positions with the Illinois Education Association and the National Education Association.

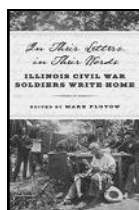
Klinckna retired in 2017 after serving six years as President of the Illinois Education Association.

A member of the boards of the Dana Thomas House Foundation, the Illinois State Museum Society and the Illinois State Historical Society, Klickna served as a trustee of the Illinois Teachers' Retirement System from 2003-2019. She is also on the board of the Illinois Educators' Credit Union and the United Way Education Vision Council.

On The Calendar

The *Historico* Calendar of Area History Events includes not only the dates and information about the Sangamon County Historical Society meetings, special events and, where applicable, registration deadlines or filing dates, but also, as space permits, information about events being sponsored by other local history organizations. All area history organizations are welcome to post their events on the Society's website at sangamonhistory.org by sending your notice to sangamonhistory@gmail.com.

Saturday, January 11: *In Their Letters, In Their Words: Illinois Civil War Soldiers Write Home*, reflecting the research for a new book and featuring its editor Mark Flowtow, 1 p.m. Illinois State Military Museum 1301 North MacArthur Boulevard, Springfield. Free. For information call 217-781-3910.



Tuesday, January 21: *Stories Behind the Stories*. A panel of writers specializing in researching local history share with Sangamon County Historical Society members and guests, backstories and more culled from their research, 5:30 p.m. Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library. Free and open to the public. (See story, page 1).

Thursday, January 30: *Sangamon Experience Grand Opening*. 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., University of Illinois Springfield

Public Affairs Center, 2200 Ernest Hemmingway Drive, Springfield, IL. Reservations are required by January 22 at 217-206-6018 or on-line at <https://forms.uofi.uis.edu/sec/3259339>. (See story, page 6)

Tuesday, February 18: *Sangamon County Historical Society Monthly Program* (TBA), 5:30 p.m., Carnegie Room North, City of Springfield Lincoln Library. Free and Open to the Public.

Saturday, March 21: *8th Annual SCHS Trivia Night*, Parish Hall, Christ the King Church, 1221 Barberry Drive, Springfield. Doors open at 6 p.m., game begins at 7 p.m. Food and drinks available. Tickets at \$10 per person, table of 10, \$100. (See story, page 1).



Sangamon County Historical Society

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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. Our membership year runs from June 1 to May 31. All memberships — except Business/Corporate and college/university students — cover adults and children 16 and over at the same address. Be sure to include their names.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ Phone: _____

Cell: _____ E-mail: _____



Status

___ New Member

___ Renewal

___ 2019-2020 GIFT of Membership from:

Phone _____

2019-2020 Membership Levels

Except for business and college/university student membership, all levels listed below cover adults and children 16 and over *living at the same address*. **Please list their names in the space below.**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Membership - \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> College/University Student (individual) - \$20. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pioneer Level - \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Settlers Level - \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trailblazer Level - \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership - \$700 (one time fee) |

I am adding a donation of \$ _____.