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The PCs for People team poses with half of the 800 computers prepped for the Urban League Thanksgiving meal distribution. From left: Morrell Grant, David Taitano (operations manager), Marquitta Morgan, Jhalyn McMath, Jennifer Reeves, Kevin Poe (managing director), and Kryndle Schobert. Deandra Brock (tech supervisor) is leaning on the boxes in the middle.

Affordable PCs put area in world’s reach

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Teach a man to fish, you’ll feed him for a lifetime, but provide him with a computer and he’ll connect with the world. In the broadband sense, there is connectivity to spare at PCs for People, a national nonprofit now with a spacious warehouse in Belleville that is becoming a downstate hub for people needing free or affordable computers.

The complex at 100 Florida Ave. is an 87,000-square-foot assortment of storage, refurbishing and distribution for old computers and related equipment — a veritable brain trust for handling thousands of donated PCs. And, things are booting up, says Managing Director Kevin Poe. With the help of a large grant and partnerships with several key stakeholders, the organization is working on a long-

term commitment to the 40 counties it serves in Southern Illinois. PCs for People bought the building from The Roho Group, a maker of wheelchair cushions, and moved in in January 2021. Roho subleased the building for about five months before moving out as part of a consolidation of its Belleville properties.

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Looking back upon a year like no other

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

In the long history of time, 2021 was just a speck, but most of us agree it was not all that great. Locally, it started with a continuing pandemic and ended with the deadliest tornado in years. In between there was a pervading sense that this craziness is going to continue into 2022. Still, there were bright spots amid the gloom. This issue focuses on those. Following is a month-by-month recap of major developments from 2021.

In January, Contegra Construction Co. in Edwardsville completed the second of what would become four new warehouses in the Gateway TradePort area of Pontoon Beach. IMPACT Strategies broke ground on the 50 West Office Building in O’Fallon, Ill., a Class A office building near the new HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital. **In February**, the owners of Ravanelli’s Restaurant closed their location in Granite City after nearly 60 years in business. A second location, recently remodeled in Collinsville, remains open. Former House Speaker Michael J. Madigan, 78, announced he would step down from the state House of Representatives after 50 years in office. **In March**, construction began on the R.P. Lumber CENTER, an ice rink and recreational facility located off Governors’ Parkway adjacent to Edwardsville High School.

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Couple brings life back to old shopping center

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Horace Greeley’s famous advice was to go west, but Todd and Julia Kennedy are putting their money east of the Mississippi River. Specifically, they are rebuilding Eastgate Shopping Center in East Alton. Theirs is the kind of cautionary tale familiar to business people venturing into unknown waters, but right now it’s also a story with a rosy outlook. The Kennedys are four years into a major transformation of one of the region’s older shopping plazas, and the place is a stunner for those who haven’t seen it in a while, nearly

filled with tenants after years of vacancies. Their approach may hold lessons for other yesteryear shopping centers. For the Kennedys, the project means most of their time and a lot of hard work. They became owners of Eastgate on Dec. 31, 2017. “I live and breathe this place,” said Todd Kennedy, who admits to often working seven days a week. “It’s not about the money, and I know that sounds crazy. It’s about the accomplishment of taking something that doesn’t exist and building it from the ground up.”

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A new food court is one of multiple recent additions to Eastgate Shopping Center.



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ILLINOIS BUSINESS JOURNAL ROUTING SLIP

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