

At the Crossroads with Keith Harden

Interviewed by
Susan Plackett

When I hear the name Keith Harden, I think of my favorite story telling blues music.

Who inspired you the most in your music career?

“I can’t name just one, Mom who played piano and my uncles played guitar. My Dad played trombone and my grandma played organ in the Methodist church. My first guitar was given to me

by my uncle Bob when I was seven years old. There’s a long string of relatives who played music.”

In the mid 60’s local garage bands would perform at the township hall.

“My friends and I would practice in the basement of the Methodist church.”

“When I was very young, we lived on Vorcey Street, and the Illinois Central Railroad was literally in our backyard. Later we moved to

Main Street and the Wabash railroad was in our backyard so trains were always present in my life. That inspired me to write “Trains in My Backyard”. One of my earlier memories was of how much thick black smoke came out of the old coal-powered locomotives. “

Do you have a favorite song?

“I have written several songs, and my favorite is different every day



Eating on the lighter side

This finds us on a nice summer morning. It is plenty hot and humid for me. The Laundry should dry nicely. We received 2 to 3 inches of rain a couple of days ago. The rain was needed, when driving down the road you can almost see the corn grow.

I took time off yesterday with some ladies. We were celebrating birthdays.

The catering last week for the 90-year-old went well. It was held at the Sco-vill Zoo in Decatur. This is a very nice place for such an event. They have several buildings for rent to accommodate various size groups.

Next week I have a group of 22 coming for a dinner here in our home. I am hoping for cooler weather.

Try these lighter dishes.

Strawberry Crunch Salad

- 2-3 heads leaf lettuce
- 2 c. shredded mozzarella cheese
- 3/4 qt. strawberries
- 4 c. chow mein noodles
- 3/4 c. pecans
- 3/4 c. vegetable oil
- 1/4 c. sugar
- 1/3 c. vinegar
- 2 tsp. poppy seeds
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 2 Tbsp. sour cream, rounded

For Dressing: Cook vegetable oil, sugar and vinegar for 1 minute. Add poppy seeds, salt, pepper and sour cream. Cool completely. When ready to serve, mix dressing with rest of ingredients.

Oriental Salad

- 1 bunch romaine lettuce
- ½ c. diced green onions

- 1 pkg. crumbled ramen noodles, chicken flavored

butter; cool and add to lettuce. Shake dressing ingredients in a jar 10 minutes before serv-

From My Amish Kitchen

By Doris Yoder

- 1½ c. sliced almonds
 - 2 Tbsp. sesame seeds
- Dressing:
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
 - 1½ c. vegetable oil
 - 6 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
 - 1 tsp. pepper
 - flavor packet

Chop lettuce and add diced onions. Toast noodles, almonds and sesame seeds in

ing. Mix with salad.

Optional: Grilled chicken pieces or crumbled bacon makes this extra good!

Crunchy Tossed Salad

- 1 lg. head lettuce
- 8 bacon strips fried
- 1/3 c. sliced almonds, toasted
- 14 c. sesame seeds, toasted

- 4 green onions, sliced
- 34 c. chow mein noodles
- sunflower seeds (optional)

Dressing:

- 1½ c. vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. vinegar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1½ tsp. pepper

Mix all together just before serving. Sprinkle noodles on top.

Cole Slaw

- 1 head cabbage, shredded
 - 1 head broccoli, cut in pieces
 - 2 carrots, shredded
 - 1 onion, chopped
 - 1 pepper, diced
 - 1 lb. bacon, crisply fried
 - 8 oz. shredded cheese
- Dressing:
- 2 c. salad dressing (Miracle Whip)

- ¼ c. sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vinegar
- 2 tsp. celery seed

Place shredded cabbage onto large serving plate. Add broccoli, carrots, onions and pepper in layers. Pour dressing on top. Put bacon and cheese on top of dressing.

Another Cole Slaw

- 1 lg. cabbage, shredded
- 1 sm. onion, chopped
- 1 c. sour cream
- 1 c. Miracle Whip
- ¼ c. sugar
- 1tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. celery seed

Mix dressing together and stir into cabbage. Top with bacon crumbles and shredded cheese. Very simple and creamy. Serves lots. Enjoy!

Illinois distributes first \$25M to local pharmacies

The funding was generated by a fee levied on pharmaceutical middlemen.

CHICAGO — Gov. JB Pritzker announced Friday that 434 Illinois pharmacies will receive nearly \$25 million in support, the first distribution of annual funding established through legislation he signed last year.

The fund was designed to assist pharmacies most at risk of closure or financial strain, especially those in rural and low-income communities with limited healthcare access. The pot was split equally between all eligible applicants, with each pharmacy receiving \$56,892.

“Local pharmacies are often one of the most accessible and affordable points of care for working families, seniors, and Medicaid patients — providing medications, vaccinations, and trusted health care ser-

vices,” Pritzker said in a news release.

The money was established under bipartisan legislation Pritzker signed last July. The bill, known as the Prescription Drug Affordability Act, put new regulations on pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, companies that are responsible for negotiating drug prices between employer health insurance plans and pharmaceutical drug companies.

They have been the target of intense scrutiny in recent years, facing accusations of steering patients toward their own affiliated pharmacies and designing healthcare pricing formulas that boost their own profits rather than patient savings, including a lawsuit from the Federal Trade Commission against the three largest PBMS

for their alleged use of anti-competitive practices to artificially inflate insulin prices.

The legislation prohibited PBMs from steering customers toward large pharmacies in which they have a financial interest — often to the detriment of smaller independent pharmacies — and required they pay a fee based on the number of individuals in the state enrolled in the PBM’s plans.

At the time the legislation passed, a lobbying organization representing the PBMs criticized the bill as “misguided” and said it would have little to no impact on high prescription drug prices set by “Big Pharma.”

Read more: Pritzker signs health care legislation

The first \$25 million in fees

collected were placed in a special fund for independent pharmacies, which can use the money to support existing operations, as well as expansions of business hours and new offerings, such as telepharmacy services, remote consultations and medication delivery.

But the funding is not constrained to specific spending options, allowing pharmacies to use it however they see fit. For a Sav-More pharmacy in Virden, Illinois, that looks like a new parking lot.

“Limitations with parking, the lack of a drive-through, and space constraints have made it difficult to expand the services our community deserves,” said Sav-Mor Pharmacies President David Falk.

The funding has allowed the Virden location to partner

with Carlinville Hospital to construct a new 3,500 square-foot facility next to a new clinic, featuring “ample parking, modern technology, (and) a drive-through,” and employing additional staff.

“This project would not have been possible without the vision and commitment of Governor Pritzker and his administration,” Falk said, adding that PBM reimbursement practices had hindered independent pharmacies like Sav-More.

The program, administered by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, granted funding to pharmacies in 252 cities scattered across 94 of the state’s 102 counties.

Prioritized were pharma-

cies in rural or medically underserved communities and small independent pharmacies with fewer than 10 locations.

A full list of pharmacies receiving the support can be found here: <https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/downloads/illinois-pharmacy-support-program.xlsx>

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

St Patrick’s in Tolono serves others this summer

Jan Blaney started the St Patrick’s Luncheon on Wednesday June 10th playing the “Unicorn Song” as her granddaughter did a dance as part of the special Father’s Day theme. Rod Millsap played the guitar and sang, too.

During the Catholic Charities for Champaign and Piatt County Board meeting on June 9th, coordinator Jan Blaney submitted a report about May 2026 activities. The St Pat’s Pantry located in the St Patrick Parish Center (304 E Vine) in Tolono was open 9 times during May (closed Memorial Day). 12 volunteers provided 150 hours of service with several volunteers in the process of renewing their certification with the Diocese of Peoria. The pantry received a site-visit from Eastern Illinois Foodbank on May 15 and met full compliance. 70 families



were served during May including 3 new families. 14 families came multiple times for a total of 108 visits to the pantry. Any one is welcome to come and pick out their

favorite items, including refrigerators with meat and dairy products. There are no restrictions for residency, age, religion, gender, race, or income. Efforts are made to

accommodate special diets with some gluten free options and area gardeners bringing produce to share with others.

Donations are received weekly from parishioners of

St Patrick in Tolono and St Thomas in Philo along with the Mail carriers food drive on May 11th netted 2,597 pounds of non-perishables. The Meal Connect program, including donations from Dollar General stores in Philo, Tolono and Villa Grove; and Aldi in Savoy totaled 3,237 pounds. Eastern Illinois Food Bank provided 2,996 pounds at no cost and 2,854 pounds for \$654.78. Weekly donations were made to the Unity High and the Rocket Locker before school wrapped up for the summer. The pantry was so well stocked that we were able to share with other pantries including The Giving Place in Tolono, The Free Pantry in Murdock and the Empty Tomb in Champaign.

The Senior Luncheon was held May 13th with 29 in attendance in the St Patrick Parish Center located at 304 E Vine in Tolono. The Parish

Center is handicapped accessible. The theme was Mother’s Day and all guests were gifted with long stemmed flowers and chocolates (decorations were provided by Jan Blaney). The entree was fried chicken and guests provided a variety of side dishes for the potluck. 7 birthdays were acknowledged and 20 door prizes distributed. Larry Kearns was caller for “white elephant” bingo. The June 10th had a Father’s Day as the theme with pork as the entree. Anyone over age 55 is welcome to attend and bring a dish to share for the potluck. Donations for door prizes are appreciated. There are no residency, religion, or income requirements. Rod Milsap, well known local country music singer, provide entertainment. A donation of \$3 is suggested, but no one is turned away.