

50 Missourians you should know

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Jim Dierberg

FIRST BANK, CREVE COEUR

In 1966, at the age of 29, Jim Dierberg took over the helm as president of First Bank in Creve Coeur, outside of St. Louis. At that time, First Bank had one office and \$10 million in assets. Today, it has more than 160 offices and \$9.07 billion in assets—roughly 1,345 times the inflation rate. So when Dierberg says the most important driver of success is putting the customer first, you'd better believe he means it.

Much of that success, he said, is grounded in the qualities of people from Missouri—in particular, his employees. "Missourians are honorable, open, inventive, intelligent, and hard-working people," Dierberg said. "The success of our businesses in Missouri has been achieved by our employees with these attributes. I have always strived to hire people smarter than I. This has worked well."



Dierberg has another penchant for growing things: Grapes. He and his wife own three wineries in both Missouri and California, where the bank also has operations. That interest allows him to indulge in two of his paired favorites, he said: Red wine and Missouri beef. It also allows him to work in two different venues. "Missouri's climate," he says, "is restrictive, which means that we work within those parameters." So Dierberg says they continue to experiment on the best way to grow grapes and make wine. *Hmmm: Sounds like a metaphor for managing a bank...*

Benny Lee

DURACOMM, KANSAS CITY

When you see the familiar "A Benny Lee Company" tag applied to his ventures, don't confuse the article with an initial: He really has enough companies to warrant that "a." This native of Taiwan has realized the true potential of the American Dream, first by founding Top Innovations, a steam-cleaning concern he sold several years ago. He used proceeds from that to buy DuraComm, a supplier of AC-DC switch-mode power sources (and growing 30 percent a year, Lee says), then added DuraComm Lighting, which supplies high-end LED lighting fixtures and components. He also has launched the Lee Research Institute, hoping to capitalize on the demand for clinical trials in the pharmaceutical sector. That's a lot to take on in just a little more than 15 years after coming to this country. "It is my passion to contribute to the business culture of Kansas City," says Lee. "I enjoy growing businesses and finding new markets for products and services, not only in the United States but in other countries, as well." Somewhat less conservative than his American peers in his approach to business, he says, Missouri nonetheless "enjoys the benefits of many outstanding entrepreneurs who have taken extensive risks to bring their dreams to fruition." They are inherently friendly and willing to share ideas, he says, and "these are reasons I enjoy doing business here." His most inspirational Missourian? Henry Bloch. "A true visionary," Lee says. "He has set the standard for many others to follow."



Charlie O'Reilly

O'REILLY AUTO PARTS, SPRINGFIELD



For nearly 100 years, the O'Reilly family of Springfield has been making its living from auto parts, more than half of that time under its own banner as O'Reilly Auto Parts. But under former president Charlie O'Reilly, it grew from a regional operation into a national force. His 18 years as president set a tone for continued growth and expansion that continues today, nearly a decade after his retirement. That tone is grounded in a philosophy that he and his sister and brothers—including current company co-chairman David—made a part of their management style, handed down from previous generations: The harder you work, the luckier you get. Sales for the group were a respectable \$7 million in 1975, nearly two decades after O'Reilly's grandfather and father launched the company. But under Charlie's watch, the company grew from 45 stores to more than 200, operating in four states. He oversaw acquisitions that expanded the company's footprint throughout the South, and in 1993, he guided its transition to a publicly traded company. Today, it is the nation's third-largest auto-parts supplier, with more than 47,000 employees and 3,600 stores in 38 states, and annual revenues approaching \$5 billion. The company also spreads the wealth around with its prodigious record of donations to schools and universities.

Joe Edwards

BLUEBERRY HILL, ST. LOUIS

Joe Edwards was able to open Blueberry Hill, his signature St. Louis restaurant, in no small part because of the affordable rents. But affordable rents, alas, come with baggage, so after a few years of getting the restaurant up and running, Edwards set out to lift the neighborhood around it up to his own standards. What's happened since has transformed that section of the famed Loop district into a magnet for entertainment, dining and boutique shopping.

"We almost went out of business three times in the first two years, and I banned two-thirds of those first customers for life, so you get a sense of now not-so-nice the area was," Edwards recalls. But, he says, that no-nonsense stance set a tone for other businesses in the area, and they followed his lead with local alliances and initiatives to improve the neighborhood. Through the 1980s, the area recovered. By the '90s, it was thriving, he said. And that was testament to the power of a value he ascribes to Missourians: Determination. "If you believe in something strongly, it gives you boundless energy to do it," he said. "Seeing the area getting better made it worth doing."

He looks for that, and such values as work ethic and idealism, in employees. "I expect people to treat others with respect and consideration. If you're late for work, you're not considerate of your fellow workers," Edwards said. "If you treat people politely, things will work out."

With half a dozen ventures up and running in the area, his next big transformational project is returning the St. Louis fixed-track trolley to the area. "Good, clean electric transit in high-density areas," he says, "can be really beneficial. We don't have to spend 24 percent of our income on transportation and live in the suburbs."



Jack Smith COLUMBIA
JACK SMITH CREATIVE SERVICES



The Leo Burnett advertising agency gave the world the Keebler Elves, the Jolly Green Giant and Tony the Tiger. So when Jack Smith, a creative director there, earned the title "King of the Jingle," you knew he had to be pretty good. And the ad world agrees: Smith was recently inducted into the Advertising Hall of Fame.

This Chicago native who came to the University of Missouri as a student made it part of his DNA before launch that career back home. When it was over, in 1994, he fulfilled a promise he'd made to himself decades earlier, walking across MU's campus: "I'm going to come back here to live someday." Today, his Jack Smith Creative Services feeds a creative pipeline that runs into MU as both a vendor and, for 13 years, on the advertising faculty. "If there was a formula to my work, and what I tried to teach, too, it was get a good, strong message," he said. "But that's only half the game; some quit there. You have to take that insight and create a special message about the product and wrap it in humanity." Few did that better than Smith, who rose to Leo Burnett's board of directors before retiring. Now, he's back in a place where he feels a special bond. Where, exactly, does he feel that bond at its strongest? Without hesitation, he replies: "Farout Field!"

Jerry Riffel LATHROP & GAGE, KC

His roots don't say Missourian, but it's been a long time since he had an address in Kansas. Missansan? Kanourian? Nope, Jerry Riffel really is something else—an example of what the area could be with a little more unity. "There are no true cultural conflicts between the states of Kansas and Missouri," declares Riffel, a lawyer for Lathrop & Gate. "Kansas City is the urban mecca of both states. I maintain this premise against all comers." This Hutchinson native and twin-degree holder from the University of Kansas has done plenty in his career for Kansas City, St. Louis and Missouri. A stint on the City Council in the late '80s left people thinking he was a development lawyer, he said. So "I decided that the best economic solution for me and my family was to capitulate to the market" and enter that very field. At one point, he had four pending redevelopment projects in St. Louis and Kansas City, each of which exceeded \$300 million, such as the Kauffman Center. Most "were part of the key strategy of each of Missouri's urban areas to recover and prosper," Riffel said. "I get tremendous satisfaction partnering with cities, counties, banks and developers" in projects that "bring joy and meaning to the lives of thousands and thousands of people."



Himadri Chakraborty

NANOPHYSICIST, NORTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY, MARYVILLE



As a scientist, Himadri Chakraborty puts a lot of weight in evidence-based conclusions. "This is where I find the Missourian 'show-me' value, that is believe if only there are evidences, deeply resonates in me," says Chakraborty, who turned down an offer from the larger University of Kentucky to establish a nano-level program at Northwest Missouri State. "I guess I did not want to be like another fish in the ocean, but instead to be the part of a growing program in which I would have the freedom to create and contribute so I can leave a mark in history." That he's doing, bringing the business community and academia together at Northwest's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. "I never expected the extent of support we have been receiving and the depth of belief we saw among the people from the region," he says. A native of India, he's absorbed Missouri culture to develop an admiration



for St. Louis-born poet T.S. Eliot, and, somewhat improbably, comedian Dick Van Dyke. Poetry, he says, "is my hidden love," and Van Dyke connects with his "spontaneous flow in the art of fantasy-acting."

And if you ever want to visit Chakraborty's favorite spot in Missouri, it will have to be by invitation: It's "the deck in the back of my house looking up toward the Maryville sky—infinite and star-twinkled," he marvels.

Katie Steele Danner DIVISION OF TOURISM, JEFFERSON CITY

"As a Scorpio," says Katie Steele Danner, "I always feel more at home close to water." This might not be the land of 10 bazillion lakes, but Danner can thank her lucky Zodiac status that she hails from a state that has ample aquatic assets. "Mother Nature and the Corps of Engineers have given Missouri plenty of options from the Missouri River to Smithville Reservoir and Table Rock Lake. I am fortunate to always be close to these assets wherever I travel in Missouri." And travel is, indeed, Danner's gig. Since late 2009, she's served as director of the state's Division of Tourism, responsible for promoting an industry with an estimated economic impact of nearly \$12 billion a year. She serves in that capacity with efforts to tout everything from the venerable Gateway Arch to the nascent Kauffman Performing Arts Center. The prodigious promotional pitches she tosses out every day from her @Katie'sTrail handle on Twitter even include gems like this: "Just got behind cattle semi truck. Smells like money." Getting around the state as she does, Danner has a perspective on Missourians that many of us may lack from our fixed fortifications. "Missouri," she declares, "is a beautiful, tenacious, diverse state with strong-minded and resilient residents."



William Least Heat-Moon

AUTHOR, COLUMBIA

The internal combustion engine and the interstate system combined to erase the nomadic spirit of Americans who settled this region, but William Trogon—better known by his pen name, William Least Heat-Moon, isn't bound by either. The author of *Blue Highways* and *Riverhorse*, who has elevated travel-based reporting to a science, can be found not on the road less-traveled, but on places where roads aren't part of the travelogue. He broke on to the American literary scene with *Blue Highways*, inspired by a 13,000-mile sojourn taken after finding himself separated from his wife and his job as a teacher. He was 38 back then, in 1978, and by the time he'd finished the soul-searching journey, the chronicles he compiled proved not only career-changing, but life-changing. What did he learn about America on the road or on the waterway? "When you're traveling, you are what you are," Moon has said. "People don't have your past to hold against you. No yesterdays on the road." But any voyage of discovery must come with an understanding that it can change your life—and even your understanding of yourself. Through the rigors of his travels, he says "I did learn what I didn't know I wanted to know."



Jack Magruder A.T. STILL UNIVERSITY, KIRKSVILLE

His family moved to Kirksville when Jack Magruder was just eight years old, and he stayed in town right through graduation from Northeast Missouri State University (now Truman State). Although he secured graduate degrees from Northern Colorado and Louisiana State, and trained in educational administration at Harvard, Kirksville had a special gravity that he never could escape.

Magruder went on to teach chemistry at his alma mater for 22 years, then became VP for academic affairs and president for nine years. After retiring in 2007, he found another opportunity in higher ed—right there in Kirksville, as president of A.T. Still University.

What has a career in higher education taught Magruder about Missouri's youth? For one, the capacity of students not just to learn, but to teach him a few things, as well. Many have gone on to leadership positions in Missouri politics, medicine, banking, business administration and non-profit leadership, but "all of them have been students," Magruder said, "and all of them have helped me in some way. When I think about the good they do for society, I'm enormously pleased."

In 2009, Gov. Nixon designated Magruder as a member of the Missouri Academy of Squires, a half-century old honorary association limited to 100 living Missourians. That prestigious group's roster boasts Supreme Court justices, U.S. senators, civil-rights activists and several from Ingram's '50 Missourians'.



Charles Drury DRURY INNS, ST. LOUIS

Missouri has no shortage of power players in business, but how many of them can claim to have dined at the White House and had an audience with the pope? Here's one: Charles Drury, patriarch of the St. Louis-based Drury Inn hotel chain. He and his wife, Shirley, met with Pope Benedict XVI three years ago when the pontiff visited Washington—an experience, Drury would later say, that rekindled his commitment to meeting the needs of the poor. "Now we have to get down to serious business and do what we promised the Holy Father we would do," Drury told Catholic News Service. Drury has done exactly that. He and his wife are on the board of the Papal Foundation, helping it raise an endowment of more than \$110 million, which allows the pope, at his discretion, to assist the poor and sick around the world. After building up the hotel chain group started by his father, Drury presides as chairman over a family of hotel companies operating more than 130 properties in 20 states. His own success has fostered a strong urge to pay it forward, leading to his service on various boards and leadership roles with Catholic schools stretching from Springfield to Cape Girardeau to St. Louis.

Brian Hammons HAMMONS PRODUCTS, STOCKTON

Many might take offense at being told their career choice was nuts. But, like the two generations before him, Brian Hammons is making the most of things as CEO of the 65-year-old family business, Hammons Products Co. in Stockton. And the black walnut itself, the life's blood of his business, is a window into the character of a Missourian—"enterprising, industrious, self-sufficient," he says. "Sixty-five percent of all the wild black walnuts harvested are picked up by Missourians. We know that people here don't like to waste or pass up a money-making opportunity. I'm amazed every fall to see that happen—the ingenious ways people create to harvest, hull, or crack black walnuts."

The company buys more than 24 million pounds of those every year, selling nuts to the food industry and shells to various sectors: "From cosmetics to oil filtration to cleaning metal or brick," Hammons says. "Even the Statue of Liberty was cleaned with black walnut shells!"

It's a love that sprouted early, stuffing sales letters for mailings with his sister when he was kindergarten-age, he said. But his father "provided a great model for me in so many ways, and the most important quality was integrity, consistently doing the right thing, doing what you say you'll do." Another was community service, and taking time to help make things better.

A favorite black-walnut recipe for a man who spends every day of his work-year around walnuts? "Black walnut sheet cake," he says. It was a specialty of his mother's for years. "The combination of bold black walnuts, moist chocolate cake and fudge frosting is perfect—a great finish to a nice, casual meal. Makes my mouth water just thinking about it!"



Susan Brown

THE LODGE OF
FOUR SEASONS,
OSAGE BEACH



Susan Brown knows who Willard Vandiver was. That should tell

you how "Missouri" she is: He was the turn-of-the-century (20th, not 21st) congressman popularly credited with branding this as the "Show-Me" state. In her view, people from Missouri are still like that today: Open to new ideas, as long as they're shown to be not just new, but better. "Yet you will also find Missourians warm and friendly, and they accept you for who you are," she says. "They have good Midwestern values."

That includes a special brand of sincerity that she sees first-hand as owner of The Lodge of Four Seasons on the Lake of the Ozarks. "The lake is unquestionably one of the most generous communities I have seen, both in terms of giving money and time," she says.

She inherited the popular resort from the estate of her father, Harold Kopljar, who had hotel and media interests in St. Louis. He was "a visionary." She learned from his ability to find the right people to make an enterprise succeed, and he remains her most inspirational Missourian. When he started building the resort 50 years ago, she was instantly hooked. She and her husband, Peter, can easily get into Kansas City or St. Louis for a bigger-city getaway, but the lake, she says, is her place: "There is an appreciation we get from the natural beauty and serenity of the lake and it is shared by our family and friends."

Seth Myers AIR EVAC LIFE TEAM, WEST PLAINS

"Rural people," says Seth Myers, "help other rural people because they have a common bond." Combine that with what he calls the "great work ethic, belief in the best of people and down-to-earth" qualities of Missourians, and you have the recipe for what might seem an unlikely construct: a company with the world's largest fleet of medically equipped Bell Long Ranger helicopters, based in West Plains, population 11,000. Myers is CEO of Air Evac, the nation's largest independently owned air medical service, operating 110 Long Rangers from 95 bases in 14 states. It was founded 25 years ago, Myers said, to address a life-and-death inequity: "Rural people are three times more likely to die of the same injuries and accidents than their urban counterparts simply because of a lack of timely access to advanced health care." Before joining Air Evac in 2003, Myers had counted Kansas City among his career stops in the air medical sector and he still enjoys getting back: "If we want to recharge our batteries, we head for the weekend to our condominium in Kansas City near the Power and Light District," he said. "We feed off the high energy of the area for several days and head back to West Plains recharged for work and play."



Mary Strauss FOX AND ASSOCIATES, ST. LOUIS

Most everything you need to know about Mary Strauss is reflected in the splendor of the historic Fox Theatre in St. Louis. For years, the 52-year-old theater sat dying and decaying before a group of business leaders bought the building and put her in charge of breathing life back into it. And in that effort you can see the kind of commitment to detail—and to doing things right—that has served as her hallmark. She and her late husband, Leon, she said, "were dreamers and believed that one could make anything happen with hard work, passion and perseverance." People thought they were crazy to take on the Fox project she said, but "we really believed that saving the Fox would be an asset to the city and serve as a catalyst for the revival of mid-town St. Louis, which is now known as Grand Center and is a thriving arts and entertainment district." Strauss got into the project for love of the building, not for collecting hardware of her own, but today, she possesses three Tony awards for productions managed at the Fox since it reopened. Given the simple goal they had at the start—"Just break even!" she says—she calls the Tonys icing on the cake. In addition to her contributions with the theater, Strauss serves as President of Art Access, Inc., and her service record includes presidency of the St. Louis International Film Festival.



Curtis McClinton CENTRAL CONTRACTING, KC

This is what a true renaissance man looks like: All-star pro athlete. Investment banker. Singer trained in classical voice. Graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Deputy mayor of the nation's capital and former Commerce Department official. And now, owner of a Kansas City contractor. But to those old enough to remember when the words "Kansas City Chiefs" and "Super Bowl champions" actually fit in the same sentence, he'll always be No. 32: Running back Curtis McClinton. He score the first AFL touchdown in Super Bowl history, a 7-yard pass from Len Dawson, then went out on top after the 1970 NFL title game. In leaving football for more meaningful pursuits, he fully embraced life's possibilities, and today, one of his favorite sayings is "I'm excited about living past my prime." It's been quite a journey for the youngster from Wichita, who went to work for his grandfather and father at the family's grocery store until he was 16. He was an All-American as a high school football player his senior year, and twice earned that honor at the University of Kansas, where he also was the Big Eight's high-hurdles champ in track. Most recently, McClinton has owned and operated Central Contracting Co., and he serves as a motivational speaker.



Robert McClelland

RETIRED TELEPHONE EXEC, SPRINGFIELD

Not long after Robert McClelland retired from Missouri Telephone Co. in 1998, he and company officials did something extraordinary: They gave the business to the 67 employees who had made it a successful venture. Then, he brokered Alltel's \$85 million purchase of the company in the early 1990s. "We had great employees, and I always felt that if you take care of your employees, they'll take care of you," says



McClelland. "Most of them were local, rural Midwestern boys. 'There's nothing better than rural Midwestern people' he says. Before McClelland started his career, duty called. When he turned 18, the young man from Pulaski County entered the Marine Corps at the height of World War II. He landed in Tarawa, Saipan, and Iwo Jima, learning things he'd never dreamed of—or had nightmares about. The phone industry took him to the board of what today is the Missouri Telecommunications Industry Association, he won an industry Pacesetter Award for his leadership, and he was elected to the U.S. Telephone Association Hall of Fame in 1992.

These days, he tries to get in his share of the fishing bounty that surrounds Springfield at Stockton Lake or Pomme de Terre. Table Rock? "Too many big boats," McClelland says. "But we've got, within 100 miles, 100,000 acres of water. That's a big draw, and I've fished about all of 'em."

Gary White WATER.ORG, KANSAS CITY

On a visit to Guatemala 20 years ago, Gary White's life changed with a revolting realization: Desperate children were drinking filthy, stagnant water to stave off their thirst.

And paying for it with their lives. "The status quo for addressing the global water and sanitation crisis was sorely inadequate relative to the scale of the problem," White says. "A billion people lacked safe water and 2.5 billion lacked sanitation. Progress against this crisis was too slow." That was his inspiration

for founding WaterPartners, executing water-sanitation and delivery projects in the Third World. In 2009, an alignment of interests with actor Matt Damon's H2O Africa led to Water.org. "H2O Africa was seeking organizations that could get work done on the ground, that could deliver results," White said. "WaterPartners was seen as a partner that could do that," he said, because its innovative approaches were able to make charitable dollars go farther. For most Americans, a glass of fresh water is taken for granted. The global reality has given White his purpose in life, and for his work, he was inducted into the Philanthropy World Hall of Fame in 2008. Traveling around the world has exposed him to varied cultures and experiences, but coming home to KC always refreshes his sense of what's best here.



Al Purcell ST. JOSEPH
PURCELL CONSULTING

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was created in 1988 to recognize U.S. companies and organizations for performance excellence. In the nearly quarter-century since then, only 90 have been so honored.

Defying the odds, Al Purcell has been part of two of them.

Purcell spent 40 years as an executive with Xerox in numerous positions around the country. In 1984, CEO David Kearns turned to him to lead a process-improvement effort that ended with the highly prized Baldrige honors. Then, after the company put him in charge of central U.S. operations, Purcell relocated to this region. "We fell in love with St. Joseph," he said, and he and his wife bought a farm outside the city, where they live today. "I'd never been able to be a citizen to that point; I'd always be a corporate gypsy moving around." But this was an opportunity to address that.

He had known Lowell Kruze, Heartland Health's former CEO, in 1977, and that connection led to service with Heartland's board—and a chance to again tap into his process-improvement skills. "I started working with Lowell and his team, on weekends and the like, talking about quality," Purcell said, "and the rest is history." Lightning did indeed strike twice: In 2009, Heartland was selected as one of five organizations nationwide to achieve that Baldrige Award recognition.



Sly James MAYOR-ELECT, KANSAS CITY

If you don't know Sly James by now, you haven't been paying much attention. Then again, with the kind of voter turnout Kansas City experienced in its March elections, it appears that a lot of people didn't know Sly James, or didn't know him very well. As he prepares to take office after four fractious years of City Hall politics, James is already on something of a winning streak: Not only did his campaign performance contribute to unseating a sitting mayor in February and winning that post 28 days later, but voters gave him a critical tool he'll need to oversee administration of city finances when they opted to keep the city's 1 percent earnings tax alive for at least another five years.

He followed that up earlier this month, when City Council members—a majority of whom will be taking office for the first time—pledged at a daylong retreat to foster a new sense of collaboration with the mayor, in the hopes of addressing some of the critical needs that face the city and its reputation as a center for conducting business.

So James, who said he was motivated to run for mayor out of "a sense that this city that has so much potential was being led into an abyss," will start with the closest thing to a clean slate any mayor has had for more than a decade.

Rudy Farber COMMUNITY BANK AND TRUST, NEOSHO

Neosho banker Arnold Farber died more than 30 years ago, but the advice he left for his son has an ominous, aching and, sadly, still-relevant resonance in the wake of the U.S. financial system's recent ills. "Dad always said to try not to get people into trouble, but try to get them where they really need to go," says Rudy Farber, chairman and president of Community Bank and Trust. "We try to follow that, and I think it is working reasonably well." For more than 50 years, he's taken that advice and turned CBT into something more like a clinic than a bank: "I have always felt my role was somewhat akin to that of a doctor who prescribes medication," he said. "If you give the customer too little credit he fails, too much and he fails, the trick is to know the right amount."

Farber's take on his fellow Missourians in general is that they are independent, innovative and owners of can-do attitudes. That stripe of independence, he noted, was one key to the success of his own organization. "In the first place, the bank is partially owned by our employees and this is a method to keep us independent and locally owned," he said. And for Missourians of influence in his life, he cites Jack Danforth, the former U.S. senator. Danforth, he said, "has always impressed me with his integrity and good judgment. ... I always felt his decisions were made on what was right rather than what was politically popular."

Charlie Digges RETIRED INSURANCE EXECUTIVE, COLUMBIA

Most of us like to think we'd be doing OK just to navigate a golf course when we're 92. "OK," however, isn't part of Charlie Digges' golfing vocabulary. When he gets on the course, he means business. Last summer, when he was just a bit more spry at 91, he blistered Osage National Golf Course with an 11-over-par 83. "I made a few putts and was able to hit the ball by the hole pretty good," Digges says, recalling that success. He cautions, though, that it was a bit of an aberration—the mid-90s is his normal scoring range.

If that sounds high for a retiree, give him a break. He hasn't really been at it that long. Digges waited out retirement until he was 75. Up to that point, he was a partner in The Insurance Group, formerly known as Rollins Vandiver Digges the Columbia agency where his son still works today. Digges has been a fixture in Columbia most of his life—"It's just a great place to live," he says—save for a short spell in St. Louis and two all-expenses-paid trips overseas, courtesy of the U.S. Army Air Corps and Air Force. He flew B-17s and B-29s domestically in World War II, and dropped a few live ones on North Korea in the early 50s.

Each time, though, his hometown's pull—and the character of its people—proved too much to resist. "I always think of Missourians as good, ol' Midwestern people, and all pretty level-headed," he said.



Lantz Welch
LAWYER, LAKE WINNEBAGO

There are winning lawyers, and then there is Lantz Welch. For 28 years, he's been on a winning streak, having lost exactly zero cases in that span. And among his victories are four world-record verdicts—just one reason he's been listed in Best Lawyers in America every year since that publication debuted in 1983. Among those four was his work in *Firestone v. Crown Center Corp.*, a case that provided a framework for allocating damages to victims of the 1981 Hyatt skywalk collapse. His summation in that case is considered a classic of the courtroom, and for many, it was indeed a big case. For Welch, it was just another day at the office: "It simply boosted (my career) as other cases, before and after, did," he says. "So I would guess that each win increased my confidence level." That work was a gimme compared to the toil he had to put into *Elam v. Alcolac*. For 10 grueling years, culminating in a 4½-month trial in 1988, Welch pursued justice for 31 residents of Sedalia who suffered personal injury or property loss from a chemical plant's emissions and spills. The outcome has earned him praise for the social contribution it made, as well as for verdicts totaling more than \$49 million.

But litigating is the job description: "I've tried over 200 jury cases to verdict," and learned from each outing."



Clyde Lear LEARFIELD COMMUNICATIONS
JEFFERSON CITY

Sometimes, the right professors in school guide you straight into your career. Sometimes they do you a bigger favor. Take Clyde Lear's early ambitions in the dental arts. "Oh man! I'd have been a terrible dentist!" he bows. "Thankfully, I attended a small college where a professor pushed me out of the nest." Somewhere out there, a professor from Central Methodist College can take some of the credit for what today is Learfield Communications, one of the state's biggest sports and news multimedia networks. It formed nearly 40 years ago, after Lear and Derry Brownfield decided their work for a Jefferson City radio station had primed them for ownership. Starting with farm and ranch reports, they built up their network with news broadcasts, then added a sports reporting enterprise that has put the microphone in the hands of such play-calling greats as Bob Costas, Jack Buck and Kevin Harlan. The company's success, Lear says, says as much about Missouri as anything else. "Missourians are strong believers in community and in supporting the struggling," he said. "There's an inbred desire to see everyone succeed," and many helped him find his own success. "Along the way there was no shortage of advice and constructive criticism, which proved tremendously helpful."



Kelvin Simmons JEFFERSON CITY



Back in the '70s, fellow seniors at Paseo High School in KC voted Kelvin Simmons "Most Likely to Succeed." That did more than call attention to his early achievements: "It helped me understand that people are counting on you," says Simmons, who has a lengthy record of public service in both city and state government. Those old stomping grounds are still a touchstone: "When I return to KC, I travel back to my high school, which sits on a hill," he reflects. "It is there that I reflect on my education, the values instilled in me at home, and how far I've come."

Here's how far: City Council in Kansas City, Missouri Public Service Commission, Director of the state's Department of Economic Development. And now, as Gov. Jay Nixon's top lieutenant, managing the state's \$23 billion budget and 50,000 employees. "The many opportunities I've been afforded is testament that Missouri is abundant in opportunity," says Simmons. "I feel an obligation to give back; I'm dedicated to a life of public service."



Working in the public sector has given him a different insight into the character of his fellow Show-Me Staters: "I've noticed that Missourians are hard-working, dedicated, and always willing to help others," he says. "When presented with a challenge, they are always willing to go the extra mile to work harder, longer or aspire to greater good to move the state forward. Missourians are some of the hardest-working people in the country."

Sheri Spader SPADER FARMS, ROSENDALE

Faith. Family. Friends. Those are foundational values for Sheri Spader, who runs Spader Angus and Quarter Horse Ranch in Rosendale, where she has a window on the world of agriculture. As the nexus of the Midwest's row-crop value chain and the livestock/protein chain, northwest Missouri "is a great melting pot of agriculture," she says, and the values that bond people in the state's agricultural community run deep: "We are a community, and we lean on each other," she says. People in that community, she says, are still close enough to the process "to understand that the world doesn't feed itself," and they have a special appreciation for what it takes to feed 6 billion people. In ranching circles, you could call it the grass ceiling, but Spader cut clean through it when she became the first woman to head the Missouri Cattlemen's Association.

That, she says, is testament to societal changes in this country that have opened doors for talented people in many business sectors. Off the farm, she has served on the board for the Heartland Foundation in St. Joseph while raising her two sons and a special-needs daughter, who showed her a special brand of resilience after the death of her husband, Dick. She draws her inspiration from them and from others in the farming community, she says, "who are resilient, hard-working and dedicated and who never get the spotlight."



Bob Priddy MISSOURINET, JEFFERSON CITY

His full-time job is with MissouriNet, a statewide news network based in Jefferson City that focuses on coverage of state government. But really, Bob Priddy is a student, still learning lessons about the state after decades of covering its public-policy battles and leading public figures.

Asked about key state figures that he'd like to have known, he bats out an eclectic lineup: "Mountain man Jim Bridger, Jacques Fournaise, an early settler of Kansas City who reportedly lived to be 124; George Washington Carver; Madame Chouteau, the founding mother of St. Louis; Jesse James" and Thomas Hart Benton. Nothing, though, says Missouri to Priddy quite like the Capitol, a building that he says reflects the state's history, its power and its challenges. "Close looks show leaks in the foundation, crumbling steps, cracked columns, peeling paint, deteriorating art," he says. The contradictions that are essential parts of the nature of Missouri and Missourians, he said, can be found right there. "Good and bad," Priddy says, the Capitol is what Missouri is all about."



50 You Should Know Missourians

Daniel Woodrell AUTHOR, WEST PLAINS

He's not the kind of self-important literary figure you find on the wine-and-cheese-circuits in New York. But even from his base in West Plains, Mo., in the heart of the Ozarks, Daniel Woodrell can push a noun against a verb and breathe life into his characters just as powerfully as any author in America.

His specialty is not just crime fiction, but setting those stories against the backdrop of what he knows best: the darker side of life in a part of Missouri often overshadowed by the glitz of Branson's Strip and the high-value cabin cruisers on the region's lakes. It came to him late in his writing career, but that style—"country noir," he calls it—has given him a special place in American literature for more than a decade. Two of his works have made it to the big screen. First was *Woe to Live On*, which captured the fancy of director Ang Lee and became "Ride with the Devil" in 1999. More recently, Woodrell's *Winter's Bone* became a film of the same title, winning accolades at the Sundance Film Festival.

With his reputation sealed, Woodrell could operate from almost any media center in the country. But he has chosen to remain close to his Missouri roots in a town of 11,000 people, living there with his wife, novelist Katie Estill.



Randy Kelly KELLY'S PORT, OSAGE BEACH

Randy Kelly got involved in the boating business back in 1977 with scant experience in the marine industry. Before he bought a Lake of the Ozarks marina, he didn't even know boats needed to be winterized at season's end. But you knew he was going to make it if you'd ever seen him work the business end of a bar towel—yes, he's one of those Kelly's, of Westport tavern fame. His father lent his name to the establishment, still run by his brothers, but Randy has moved on to catch a different wave.

Today, he and wife Jane own Kelly's Port Marina in Osage Beach, selling, storing and servicing the ever-growing number of watercraft on Missouri's most popular lake destination. Jane also operates a successful ReMAX real estate firm at the lake. Randy's work experiences have convinced him, he says, that two of the most consistent attributes of a Missourian are "the love of the outdoors and a sense of humor." Beyond your garden-variety resident, though, Kelly has come to love a special breed of Missourian.

"My fellow lakiers, and there are more every year," he says, share his "love of not only the lake but the lifestyle that surrounds our beautiful body of water. There are really not that many actual natives here at the lake. Like myself, there are many people that love the beauty of nature, the schools, the shopping, the dining—pretty much the whole package."



Ted Drewe Jr. DREWE'S FROZEN CUSTARD, ST. LOUIS

If you really want to measure a father's capacity for bone-dry wit, try working for your own. The late Ted Drewe Sr., who founded a frozen-custard operation in 1931 and turned it into a St. Louis institution, did so with the help of his son, Ted Jr., who grew up wondering whether he'd ever match his dad's championship-level play on the tennis court.

"I remember just before Dad died," Drewe recalls, "I asked him then if he was ever mad that I didn't become a tennis star like him. He said, 'How could you? You were always working.'" Ouch.

So, thrilling the crowds at Wimbledon wasn't in the cards. But Ted Jr. has carried on the tradition and touched more lives than anyone can count with Ted Drewe's Frozen Yogurt, operating in two locations in St. Louis. On summer nights, the lines can stretch around the block for customers who swear by Drewe's signature treats.

And, when demand for frozen goodies wanes in the late fall, Ted gears up for his annual trip to Nova Scotia. As picky about Canadian balsam firs as he is about ingredients for custard, he hand-picks trees to bring back to St. Louis, where he touches even more lives. "We have people buy their trees from us year after year," Drewe marvels, and they don't even know we sell ice cream!" Drewe and company are among the more philanthropic companies in the city bursting with corporate champions.



Jo Ann Emerson U.S. CONGRESS, CAPE GIRARDEAU

After lung cancer claimed her husband Bill, a sitting U.S. Congressman, in 1996, Jo Ann Emerson accepted an appointment to carry on his work. Since then, she's gone on to win eight elections, and the woman who didn't set out to run for office today finds herself the dean of Missouri's congressional delegation. She's been a consistent champion of conservative principles in the House, and has been mentioned as a possible challenger next year to Sen. Claire McCaskill. The values she



sees in Missourians, she says, are work ethic and love for the land, patriotism, strong national defense and pride in the rural way of life.

Conservative, yes, but her voting record also reflects both pragmatism and empathy, particularly on children's issues.

Cynthia Schwab JOPLIN PRO MUSICA

When she founded Pro Musica in 1981 to foster a regional embrace for the arts, Cynthia Schwab knew that so-so wouldn't cut it. Not in the heart of the Midwest, where resistance to change is part of the genetic code.

So it debuted with exactly one concert that first season, but she made sure it was a good one: the St. Louis Brass Quintet. "If people heard mediocre at the beginning, they would say, 'Who really needs this?'" Schwab recalls. You develop a better sense of her contributions, and her commitment from the outset, when she confesses: "God knows, nobody would have hired me to do what I do; I had absolutely no credentials. I can't play an instrument, I can't carry a tune—I can't explain it." One of her great contributions is the annual chamber music series, which remains free to anyone who wants to attend. Now, with retirement looming in June, she can reflect on Pro Musica's impact and what she'll leave behind: "Joplin is now talking about the possibility of an arts and entertainment center!" she gushes.

