

Vol. 21 No. 10 • May 15, 2024

midriversnewsmagazine.com

MID RIVERS

NEWSMAGAZINE



**Your Guide to
Free Summer Concerts**

PLUS: Coupon Savers ■ Farmers Markets ■ Vikings Thrower Breaks Record

St. Charles honors fallen Marine

By JESSICA MARIE BAUMGARTNER

St. Charles leaders and residents came together on Friday, May 3, to honor Marine Corps Sgt. Colin Arslanbas's life. People lined Interstate 70 and provided a hero's welcome that stretched from St. Louis Lambert International Airport to St. Charles County.

"In the early morning of April 19, 2024, we learned that our oldest son, Colin, died in a training accident off the coast of North Carolina the night before," Nicole Arslanbas said in a statement. Afterward, it was a blur, Nicole said, with the family trying to plan a service for Colin's fellow marines, and handling the logistics of bringing him home.

"Just weeks before Colin was set to deploy, he learned he was going to be a father," Nicole said. "He was so excited and had so much life ahead of him. It brings us peace to know that Colin's life, although cut short, was full of love and anticipation for the future."

Mark Schmitz, the father of Lance Cpl. Jared Schmitz — who died in a 2021 suicide bombing in Kabul — was a driving force behind urging people to line the roadways to support the family.

He encouraged everyone to come out

and line the procession path as they had for Jared, and discussed the plans with Nicole before the memorial.

"I told her what we went through, and I said 'this is one of the memories I will hold onto forever,'" Schmitz said. "To have the opportunity to witness your community come out and show the support and love that they do, is something that you'll carry with you for the rest of your life."

Schmitz was determined to do whatever he could to help the family, stating, "They just need to worry about Colin."

After the event, Nicole described it as healing and stated, "We're thankful that our community showed up to help welcome him home, and also let us see the support we had from our community. Thousands of people lined the streets along the route from Lambert St. Louis Airport to St. Charles County. We are thankful for every person."

"Though we will never understand why Colin had to leave us, we are forever grateful for the love and support shown to us during this time," she said.

Missouri House Rep. Tricia Byrnes (R-District 63) noted the similarities in the turnout for Schmitz's son and Colin.

"Everybody wants to do something to show honor and respect," Byrnes said.



Residents watch as the motorcade approaches.

(Photo by Jessica Marie Baumgartner)

"Sometimes it's just two feet on the ground in the right place at the right time. That's all that matters."

Missouri House Rep. Wendy Hausman (R-District 65) spoke about her experiences with the Arslanbas family. Her son swam on the same swim team with Colin when they were children.

"This hits hard," Hausman said.

The community echoed these sentiments as they lined the entrance to the funeral home and decorated the area with flags and memorial pictures of other fallen sol-

diers. Even though the motorcade suffered a delay, supporters remained, determined to support the family.

O'Fallon alderwoman Linda Ragsdale (Ward 5) was adamant about the importance of showing up. Having been born into a gold star family, after the death of her uncle who served in Vietnam she said she was raised to honor those who serve.

"It's for everybody in my family," Ragsdale said. "I got here early and seeing the people show up and seeing what it means to people, (it) means a lot to me."

Visionary group opens eyes for St. Charles County leaders

By KATE UPTERGROVE

"I have a whole new respect for first responders," confided Jacquie Vick, director of development for Habitat for Humanity of St. Charles County.

She was sharing how she recently was asked to put on full firefighter gear and enter a burning building. Tasked with operating a hose, she had to crawl below the smoke. Of course, it was a controlled burn, but it was eye-opening nonetheless — and that was the point.

The firefighter experience is part of Vision St. Charles County Leadership's First Responders Day. Held this year in late April, it was the final step in a nine-month, immersive journey.

Vick shared her experience as her fellow Vision Leadership classmates, friends, family and local business leaders and dignitaries gathered for the 2024 graduation gala on May 1.

Since 1998, Vision Leadership has provided professionals with educational leadership experiences to give them insight into everything from the county's inner workings to local nonprofits to service pro-



Vision St. Charles Leadership members prepare to enter a burning building in April.

(Source: VSCL)

viders, such as police, fire and ambulance operations, to what's happening in Jefferson City.

"We spend a full day in the Capitol meeting with state senators and representatives, getting the chance to spend time with the lieutenant governor, the state trea-

surer, state auditor, secretary of state and learning how St. Charles County fits into the economy and political aspects of our state," explained Mark Hollander, Vision Leadership's executive director. "On the second day, we have the opportunity to have breakfast or lunch with the governor

and visit the Jefferson City Correctional Center."

In addition to increasing awareness, the program aims to help its participants develop leadership skills, actively engage in county activities at the professional and volunteer levels and foster lifelong relationships.

"We have a thriving alumni group consisting of more than 500 distinguished individuals. We encourage each of them to keep in touch or reconnect with us at an upcoming activity day or special event," Hollander said.

One such special event was the graduation gala for the class of 2024, which was not only attended by alumni but celebrated them, specifically the 2024 Visionary of the Year, Rabbi Chaim Landa, co-director of the Chabad Jewish Center of St. Charles County.

Landa, a class of 2022 alum, was chosen from among eight nominees by Vision Leadership's board of directors.

In 2019, Landa and his wife, Bassy, co-founded the Chabad Center with the goal

See VISIONARY GROUP, page 14

Circle 6 meat market to launch in Defiance next to Katy Trail

By JOHN TREMMEL

The revival of downtown Defiance is gaining momentum, with a new meat market soon to open in a recently closed-down business.

In 2021, the Hoffmann Companies purchased the two-address building at 2998 and 3002 S. Missouri Hwy. 94 in Defiance. They also purchased Don's Place (a biker bar) around the corner and the Defiance Roadhouse across the street.

2998 S. Hwy. 94 was formerly the Kickstand Katy Trail bike rental and bike shop business.

3002 S. Hwy. 94 had become the Defiance General Store, opened in September 2023, with space leased from the Hoffmanns, and still in full operation today.

The Katy Trail runs behind that building.

In November 2023, the Hoffmanns shuttered Kickstand Katy Trail, Don's Place and the Defiance Roadhouse. All three were "closed for the winter season." However, they were all listed as commercial property for sale. The future was uncertain for downtown Defiance.

On March 8, Tiffany and Larry Winkler purchased the building at 2998 and 3002 S. Hwy. 94, and began the rehab at 2998, the left portion of the building. The Defiance General Store continues to operate in the right side of the building, with that space now leased from the Winklers.

Asked about plans for the building, Tiffany said they will open a Circle 6 meat market, with a goal of being open for business by Memorial Day weekend, Saturday, May 25.

Tiffany said they are proud to be the



Circle 6 building front, with Tiffany Winkler.

(John Tremmel photo)

first local Defiance and St. Charles County family to buy a Hoffmann property, in keeping with the Winklers' philosophy of "By the community, for the community." She said they also strongly believe in the philosophy of, "Shop local, eat local."

The new business will be named "Circle 6," because the meat source for the market will be Circle 6 Acres, the family farm only about three minutes away in Defiance. The farm is owned and operated by Tiffany, Larry and their five children. The children all are active participants in running the farm, as well as being active in local 4H clubs. Their farm specializes in prime Angus beef, Wagyu (Japanese cattle) beef and also pasture-raised pork products.

Tiffany said her family will manage and run Circle 6. Their plans include an "indoor farmers market," where they have arranged for local farmers' products to be sold in addition to Circle 6 Acres meat products. Those products will be from

farms in Defiance, Augusta, New Melle and Foristell.

Tiffany said that Circle 6 Acres will continue to sell their meat products at the New Melle Country Market and the Farmers and Artisans Market of O'Fallon.

One of the first challenges with the building arose when they were getting started with replacing floorboards. They found the underlying wood and supports were so rotted in the building dating to 1886 that they "had to gut the place."

The Winklers plan to bring in a 36-foot trailer housing a commercial kitchen, to be placed at the back of the building. That will enable Circle 6 to cook and serve local items from the market, in true farm-to-table fashion. They plan to take that kitchen trailer to other locations as well.

Circle 6 also plans to add something to the patio area behind the building, facing the Katy Trail, where live country-western music will be played.

Tiffany said they plan to obtain a liquor license to be able to serve adult beverages in the Circle 6 business.

As an homage to the past and to support users of the Katy Trail, Tiffany said, "We kept 34 bikes that were part of Kickstand Katy Trail. We will offer bike rentals and minor repairs for bikes as part of Circle 6."

"We see God's hand on this place," Tiffany said. "We have been trying since 2019 to find a place to open a meat market. We bought about 1.25 acres at the corner of Hwy. 94 and Route F, where a tornado had severely damaged several homes a few years ago, with that corner home completely demolished. But that location and a few others just did not work out. Then this building came on the market, the location is perfect, and we were able to make it happen. We still have plans, though, to build something of value for the community at that Hwy. 94 and Route F corner lot in the future."

In addition to running the farm, starting this new business and raising five children, Tiffany and Larry stay occupied in the community.

"Larry coaches a football team that is a feeder to Francis Howell, and I coach a feeder team to Francis Howell cheerleading," Tiffany said. "We also own an HVAC company, Country Air Heating and Cooling."

In April 2024, Marla Conn signed a lease-to-purchase agreement with the Hoffmanns and will soon be opening Wente's Defiance Roadhouse in the former Defiance Roadhouse space. The future appears brighter for downtown Defiance once again.

VISIONARY GROUP, from page 10

of building community. To accomplish that goal, the center provides programs geared toward connecting the nearly 6,000 Jews who call St. Charles County home.

"Our hope is that our programs serve as gates through which a person can meet new people, make meaningful connections and be inspired to do more good. To see a Jewish community really blossom, I think this is something that every citizen of St. Charles County can be very proud of," Landa said. "It's not the result of one person or two people, it's really a cultural shift and we're very, very grateful for that."

"When we moved here four-plus years ago, we really didn't know how people were going to respond. I knew that Jews out here were going to be excited and very positive. But I wasn't sure how the greater community would react. And just to see all

that come together reflects very well on our county.

"There's a spirit of shared success in St. Charles County. People want you to be successful. They want good things to happen and when those things happen, it's celebrated. So it's really been a wonderful journey."

Landa said Bassy deserves credit as well for the center's success.

One way the greater St. Charles County community celebrates with the Chabad Center is at its annual Jewish Festival, which will take place on Sunday, Aug. 25 in the parking lot at the Lewis and Clark Boathouse on the riverfront.

"It's coming at a time when leaning into our Jewish pride and celebrating the local community is that much more important," Landa said.

In a Facebook post announcing Landa's selection as the Visionary of the Year



Rabbi Chaim Landa with Mark Hollander

(Ashley Brown photo)

award recipient, Hollander noted that Landa "has made a tremendous impact on our community over the last several years."

"The revitalization of the Jewish community in St. Charles has been nothing short

of astounding and his ever-presence all over town has been refreshing," Hollander wrote.

Likewise, the O'Fallon Chamber of Commerce and Industries wrote that Landa is "truly a community leader!"