

For Immediate Release:

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Taylorville, Illinois: As a community bank, Peoples Bank & Trust recognizes the value of volunteerism in our communities. To recognize, commend and promote the volunteerism, Peoples Bank & Trust has established a program to recognize outstanding community members for their volunteer efforts of improvement to our community.

Chuck Martin has been chosen as current Volunteer of the Quarter for his dedication to the Christian County Coal Mine Museum.

Chuck is a Taylorville HS graduate with the class of 1970. He attended EIU where he was a student athlete in Basketball and Baseball. Chuck earned an MBA from Lindenwood University. He has been married for 48 years to Mary Jo, who is a retired elementary teacher. Chuck is currently the President of the Taylorville PEO chapter and current Kiwanis Club President.

When Chuck and Mary Jo retired in 2015, they relocated and purchased 70 acres in rural Christian County. They immediately converted 45 tillable acres to Habitat for Wildlife within the CRP program of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. They built a new house on the property and donated the old farmhouse to Missions for Taylorville, who moved the house to Hewittville giving it to a man who lost his home to the December 2018 tornado.

Martin, a former coal miner and retired business executive, has managed the Christian County Coal Mine Museum since 2015. In 2021, the museum moved to its current and permanent location at 1324 E. Park in Taylorville. A former Taylorville resident, Pat (Banko) Klingler, purchased and donated the building. "Pat's generosity made all this possible," commented Martin. "She dearly loves her hometown. Her father, John, was a coal miner."

"Mary Jo and I worked six days a week for almost 5 months in early 2021 converting the former workout facility into a coal mining showcase," said Martin. "We had lots of help from Gary Hart, Brian Hawkins, Gary Garrison, Terry White, Mike Durbin, Mike Mayer and a few others." Martin operates the museum three days a week and by appointment. "I look forward to showing our visitors the remarkable exhibits we have created," Martin explained. "And I learn something from each person who stops by."

Housing hundreds of coal mining items, over 700 framed pictures, a Coal Miners Wall of Fame, a Coal Miners' Daughters' exhibit and a simulated underground coalmine, the museum has something for everyone. With over 5,000 square feet of utilized floor space, Martin says it is difficult to see everything in one visit. The latest addition is an actual underground coal cart pulled by mules.

“My assistant, Brian Hawkins, found the cart in pieces in the Peoria area, negotiated its purchase, transported it here and was instrumental in its re-assembly just last week,” Martin said. “Gary Garrison stepped up and took the project lead regarding the re-assembly. Terry White worked countless hours assisting Gary and Brian. That cart is amazing. I encourage everyone to come see it,” Martin exclaimed.

Martin neither seeks nor accepts credit for creating this coal-mining showcase. “I had a vision about what could be done to expand the museum created by Will Stone. But, that vision required a stand alone building. Thanks to Mrs. Klingler, we now have that facility,” commented Martin. “Our annual fixed costs (property taxes, insurance, utilities and supplies) exceed \$9,000. We are an all-volunteer undertaking. No one receives or expects any payment for the time and effort we put forth. We rely solely on donations from the public to meet our expenses.”

Martin concluded by stating, “The people of the Taylorville area have been extremely supportive. Without that support, this would not have been possible. I am just glad I can give back to the community that has been so good to me and my family over the years!” Taylorville is a great place and Mary Jo and I are happy to help out in any way we can.”

In honor of Chuck Martin’s volunteer services, Peoples Bank has made a donation to the Christian County Coal Mine Museum and Chuck’s name will be placed on a plaque to be displayed at the bank.

Peoples Bank & Trust is an independent Community Bank with ten offices located in Pana, Taylorville, Altamont, Tower Hill, Charleston, Springfield, Morrisonville, Palmyra, Waverly and White Hall. Peoples is a full service bank offering outstanding customer service to consumers, small business, and farmers in Central Illinois. People First Bancshares, Inc., with corporate offices in Pana, Illinois, is the holding company for Peoples Bank & Trust.