

# Abe on the town: Series' 1st statue appears

By **JOHN REYNOLDS**

STAFF WRITER

Like many people at Friday night's Pasfield House reception, Springfield resident Carole Michael had her picture taken with the guest of honor, a life-size statue of Abraham Lincoln.

"This is a wonderful idea. I think he's great," Michael said of the smiling, waving fiberglass likeness of the city's most famous resident.

The statue is the first in a series of decorated Abe creations that will be installed at locations throughout Springfield. The project, called Abe on Parade, is designed to boost tourism, generate business and help local charities.

Coordinating the project is Opal-Oh! Productions, a Springfield-based production company owned by Matt Schultz and Kristin DiCenso.

While the Abe on display at the Pasfield House, 525-535 S. Pasfield St., was painted in a traditional black jacket, the businesses that participate in the artistic initiative will have a wide variety of designs to choose from.

One paint scheme has the Gettysburg Address written across Abe's coat, while another features a landscape. Yet another design pictures Springfield landmarks such as the Old State Capitol.

Schultz said the hands and faces of the all of the statues will be the color of skin, with the artwork limited to the coat and pants. The effort also is adhering to historical or natural themes for the artwork, and all designs must be approved by a mayoral committee.

"We are trying to be as respectful as possible," Schultz said.

Businesses that participate can choose from one of the existing designs, or can create their own, as long as it's approved. A sponsorship package costs \$3,000.

Businesses may display the decorated Abes inside or outside their doors. City officials also are working to find public space downtown for businesses that want to participate but don't have an appropriate spot to display it.

The Abe on Parade public art exhibit is scheduled to run from



T.J. Salsman/The State Journal-Register

**A festive statue of Abraham Lincoln debuts Friday at the Pasfield House.**

April to August, which coincides with the planned mid-April opening of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. There will be a contest to vote for the best-

decorated statues.

The locations of the statues

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eventually will be mapped in Abe magazine.

"I'm very excited about this project," said Benjamin Lowder, the magazine's publisher. "It is bold and interactive, and it will breathe new life into the Springfield art scene."

The statues will be auctioned off in September, with the proceeds going to a charity of the sponsor's choice.

For more information on Abe on Parade, contact Opal-Oh! Productions at 546-4124.

Information is also available at [www.abeonparade.com](http://www.abeonparade.com).

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