



OSF HealthCare marks America's 250th birthday with a patriotic display

American flag on Ministry HQ harkens back to the days of old in downtown Peoria

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(July 2, 2026 | Peoria, Illinois) - As the United States of America prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday, and The Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis embark on their 150th year of providing health care to the Peoria area and beyond, OSF HealthCare is bringing back a patriotic display from decades ago.

In the 1940's, the Block and Kuhl building, known as the "Big White Store" at the corner of Adams and Fulton Streets in downtown Peoria, was renowned for hanging a massive American flag on its facade facing SW Adams during World War II and major holidays.

The flag, which was hung horizontally across the front of the building, measured 90 by 60 feet and weighed over 400 pounds. It was widely reported to be the largest true-proportioned American flag in the world.

OSF HealthCare rescued the historic building from the wrecking ball in 2018, turning it into the headquarters for the Ministry. Throughout the restoration and transformation of the building, the question would be asked by those who remembered the giant flag, what had become of the artifact. Best that could be determined, the original flag ended up in a barn somewhere in Tazewell County and, without proper protection, had long since succumbed to the elements and animals.

Thanks to the efforts of Ryan Spain, vice president of economic development for OSF HealthCare, a new flag will hang from the building, this time facing Washington Street and the Illinois river, allowing those attending the July 4th festivities to fully enjoy it.

"In this 250th year of our nation and 150th year of OSF HealthCare, this flag stands as a symbol of hope, healing and our unwavering commitment to serve every life with the greatest care and love," said Michelle Conger, CEO, OSF HealthCare. "It also reminds us to express gratitude to all of those who came before us and made the sacrifices necessary to ensure our freedom."

The new flag, which hangs vertically, measures 86 by 50 feet, weighs 300 pounds and was made by America's Best Flags.

"A great pastime in downtown Peoria was the patriotic display of the American flag on the former Block and Kuhl building. OSF HealthCare is proud to bring back this tradition as our nation celebrates its 250th birthday," said Spain.

The flag will remain in place until after the July 4 holiday weekend.