

INCITE!

Amid strife comes kindness

When Thomas Paine wrote that “these are the times that try men’s souls,” his words were meant to arouse beaten soldiers who were on the verge of succumbing to tyranny and oppression.

Fortunately General George Washington, using Paine’s motivational directive, was able to spark a renewed commitment that led to the capture of an entire

British contingent and changed the direction of the Revolutionary War. It is not 1776 anymore. The unrest that is taking part in our country is trying both our

souls and our patience. Coupled with a worldwide pandemic and a contentious election on the horizon, our level of anguish is sky-high.

This column is not meant to make everyone feel worse. Really, how much worse do we need to feel before we no longer feel anything? This column will instead focus on something positive, just in the nick of time. It is about caring and commitment and making the kind of difference that happens when people come together who are short on talk and long on action.

Those people, in this case, are the members of the 2020 class of Leadership Blair County. Nineteen people who signed-up to learn about servant leadership more than a year ago with the expectation that they, like the twenty-five LBC classes before them, would have a relatively normal journey of education, networking and professional development.

Then March came. No more face-to-face sessions. No more visits to places that enhance the overall appreciation of Blair County. For the first time in the program’s history, the graduation ceremonies needed to be postponed without any guarantee that they’d be rescheduled.

The class never blinked. After all, there was a project to complete, a project that had already been sidetracked when the major fundraiser fell victim to Covid-19 compliance. Very quickly a reverse raffle gave way to a virtual 5k Walk/Run. Sponsors were secured and registration will take place until September 30th. Oh, by the way, did I forget to mention that proceeds from this event will benefit the Gloria Gates Foundation which reaches children from our community from low income families.

Feel better? We all should. Kindness has a way of doing that. Call the Chamber for details on how you can be part of this great effort.

Joe Hurd Blair County Chamber

PC Works Plus benefits from shared vision

David and Terra Wertz have worked together for the past 27-years. The fact that their working relationship has closely mirrored what they’ve been able to accomplish as spouses and parents has made PC Works Plus an industry leader in providing IT service, particularly to not-for-profit organizations.

Working together, as both David and Terra will admit, is much easier when the responsibilities at the office are clearly defined.

“We make a good team,” Terra disclosed. “Dave is more client-focused and I am more employee-focused. We do come together and talk about all aspects of the business to get one another’s perspective on what should be done to grow the business and solve issues.”

And when you don’t agree?

“Well . . . Terra is always right so conflict resolution is easy,” David kidded. “Seriously, it doesn’t seem like it’s been that difficult for us. When you mix a marriage and a business it can get a

Working Together

little emotional. Years ago, it may have taken longer to work things out but these days we get through conflict rather quickly.”

Much of the reason that the business runs smoothly, according to David, is the quality staff that PC Works Plus employs.

“We’ve got an incredible group of people who work here,” he pointed out. “They handle things without our constant attention. It makes it easier to focus on the business.”

Often when couples work together, it becomes difficult when the work day ends to leave the office behind and transition to family life. Not so much anymore, David emphasizes.

“Twenty-five years ago it was a problem. In those early years, all we did was work on building the business. These days it’s a rare



David and Terra Wertz credit the ability to delineate responsibilities, coupled with an excellent and hard-working staff, with making PC Works Plus a successful Blair County business.

situation where we even need to discuss business outside of work.”

Once again, Terra believes, it’s the employees that have created that comfortable environment.

“Our people are an extension of our family,” she

pointed out. “They really take the business to heart and that lets Dave and I worry less and focus on our personal lives.”

So what advice would the Wertz’s provide to spouses who suddenly find themselves working together?

“Understand and appreciate the situation for what it can be,” David acknowledged. “For me, having Terra in the business was one of the best things that could have happened. There’s a far greater upside and we recognize that more every day.”

YEA! graduate expanding business thanks to the support of investors

As the deadline approaches for Blair County students to apply to be part of the 2021 Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) class, one graduate of that program is making plans to expand the business she built two years ago.

Olivia DiPangrazio, a sophomore at Penn State, was a student at Hollidaysburg Area High School when she decided to check-out a program that she had heard about from some classmates.



Olivia DiPangrazio, shown during her presentation to the YEA! Investor Panel in 2019, is expanding her business while continuing her education at Penn State.



“It interested me because I knew it would be a great opportunity to expand my knowledge of business,” she pointed out. “It provided an opportunity to learn from CEO’s, go on field trips to see how businesses run and possibly access some funding to help get an actual business up-and-running.”

At the time, Olivia didn’t really have a specific business in mind.

“I was a little anxious because I figured there was no way that I could come up with an idea and be ready to pitch it to investors in only a couple months,” she disclosed. “But the YEA! Program gave me a chance to learn about budgeting, marketing and how to create a business plan. I was able to get feedback from professionals and gain experi-

ence networking with adults. It opened my eyes to things that I would have never realized without YEA!”

Even though most of her YEA! classmates had already determined their business ideas, Olivia still wasn’t completely sure which direction to take. That is, until she changed her mindset.

“I stopped trying to come up with new inventions or improvements to older items,” she admitted. “Instead, I started thinking about what I was really passionate about and had a good time doing.”

That turned out to be baking. By the time of the Investor Panel event in March, “Cookies & Cream Confections” had become a viable business and Olivia DiPangrazio was selected by the investors as the runner-up outstanding business. She’s been running her business from her family home but now that she’s back to school, she’s looking to expand. Thanks

to the money she received from the Investor Panel, that’s possible.

“I’ve been able to buy a new food processor to have at school as well as other supplies to make my baking process more efficient,” Olivia noted. “I’ve also bought some other appliances to create a wider variety of baked goods. I’ll be posting items on my social media sites to get feedback on what my customers want in the future.”

Down the road, Olivia is considering opening a bakery.

“I’m in the Smeal College of Business at Penn State with an intended major of accounting,” she explained. “I’m also considering a minor of entrepreneurship and innovation. YEA! had a lot to do with helping me make some important decisions. It’s a great program that I’d recommend to anybody.”

**Application
deadline for YEA!
is September 23.**

SETTING THE PACE

Holly Keller Committee of Non-Profit Businesses

1. Title and place of work:

Director of Development at Garvey Manor and Our Lady of the Alleghenies Residence.

2. Years with current position:

3 years.

3. Positions held in the Chamber:

Committee of Non-Profit Businesses member.

4. Family:

My husband Paul and I reside in Roaring Spring with our 3 children Jake, Griffin, Araya and our dog Crosby.

5. Community organizations:

Association of Fundraising Professionals Allegheny Mountains Chapter- Board Chair of Membership Recruitment, Wise Women of Blair County-Member, Cove Adoptive Families Inc. Non-Profit Adoption Advocacy Group.- President/Owner.

6. Hobbies/leisure:

There is not much leisure time between being a mother of three and working full-time but what I enjoy most is spending time with my family. I especially enjoy cheering them on at their various sporting events. We are big Pittsburgh Penguin fans if you couldn’t tell from our dog’s name.

7. Education:

I have a Bachelors of Science Degree in Social Work from St. Francis University. I am also a Licensed Personal Care Administrator.

8. First job:

A cashier at J.C. Penny’s in the Logan Valley Mall. I think it is so important for young people to have that first job experience. It teaches work ethic, responsibility, and prepares you for life’s ups and downs.

9. I would like to be known for:

My passion to help others.

10. Business role model:

My business role model is



Holly Keller

Donna Gority. When I began my career as a social worker it took one time for me to hear Donna Gority speak and I was hooked on her advocacy and determination to make Blair County a better place for children and families. It seemed like anytime there was something going on Donna would be there representing women and advocating for others.

11. Your thoughts about the Chamber:

It is a great way to get to know and to be involved in our community. The Chamber has so many groups that no matter what your interest you can find a way to get involved. The Blair County Chamber also provides so many benefits whether you are looking for advocacy, education, networking etc. You will find that other counties do not have a Chamber as active or as involved as the Blair County Chamber so if you are not already a member you should look into becoming one.

12. Your thoughts about Blair County:

I think Blair County is a great place to work and raise a family. I am excited to see the downtown growing in culture and opportunities because I do worry about our sustainability to attract future generations.

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