



**Altoona Mirror**  
Making It Happen For You

# Business Insight

The content for this page is coordinated by the Blair County Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the Altoona Mirror

**GUEST COLUMN**

## Roberts adapts to changing market

*Much has changed in the 35 years that John Roberts has been plying his craft. As President/CEO of Allegheny Orthotics & Prosthetics, Roberts started the company with locations in Altoona and Dubois in 1999 and opened a State College office three years later. Roberts, 61, is a native of Philadelphia and has lived in Hollidaysburg since 1993 where he and his wife have raised four sons.*

### Chamber Q&A

company also employs certified mastectomy fitter's who can provide traditional mastectomy forms as well as custom mastectomy prosthesis.

**The Chamber: What would people in Blair County be surprised to know about your business?**

**John:** We have made high ankle sprain braces for football players at Penn State, LSU, Nebraska, Notre Dame, and the Steelers and for basketball players at Duke.

**The Chamber: In what ways has your business changed since you first became involved in it?**

**John:** A lot has changed. From the technology of the advancement and prosthetic components, from when I started using wooden constant friction knees to the advancement of microprocessor knees that can sense instability and stabilize the prosthetic knee to prevent a patient from falling to the business side in which we would receive a prescription for an orthotic or prosthetic device, fabricate the device



John Roberts has built an impressive reputation for quality and service since opening Allegheny Orthotics and Prosthetics. His business has also been a member of the Blair County Chamber for the past 25-years.

and delivered to the patient and send a bill, to now the requirement of clinical documentation of what we are doing and why in each step of the process.

**The Chamber: Is yours a competitive industry?**

**John:** Health care in general is very competitive, with smaller health care providers being either squeezed out of markets or absorbed by larger competitors. Our competition comes not only

from companies in our own profession but also from the same companies that provide us our referrals. 15 years ago, 7 of my top 10 referrals would have been orthopedic surgeons. Today I don't have an orthopedic surgeon in my top 50 referrals. Hospital referrals and Veterans Administration referrals are both a large source of our business, but each are also starting to provide the

basic orthotic and prosthetic devices themselves. This is largely due to shrinking reimbursement in all sectors of healthcare and each industry trying to find a way to survive. Our strength comes from our knowledge of our profession.

**The Chamber: Are you ever mistaken for the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court?**

**John:** Some of my close friends refer to me just as "Chief Justice".

**The Chamber: How would you describe Allegheny Orthotics & Prosthetics to someone unfamiliar with it?**

**John:** Allegheny Orthotics and Prosthetics is a full-service orthotics and prosthetic facility providing custom made and custom fit orthotic devices ranging from cranial remolding helmets, custom made knee ankle foot orthosis, spinal orthosis and diabetic shoes, sports bracing and custom foot orthotics by certified and Pennsylvania licensed orthotists. On the prosthetic side we can provide the latest technology in microprocessor prosthetic knees and myoelectric upper extremity prosthesis by certified and Pennsylvania licensed prosthetist. The

## CPCF celebrates 25 years

It all began on March 24, 1995, when the Greater Altoona Blair County Community Endowment became a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Celebrating our 25th anniversary, the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation (CPCF) manages charitable giving by helping donors achieve their goals.

From assets of \$39,000 in 1996 to over \$25 million

currently under management and administration, we manage 264 funds created by generous community members interested in improving our community. Since inception, CPCF has distributed grants and scholarships totaling over \$20 million to over 750 organizations and 1,500 deserving students, including 146 scholarships totaling over \$129,000 in 2020.

To celebrate our 25th year, we decided to distribute special grants totaling \$25,000. Five charitable organizations were selected to each receive a \$5,000 award. They include:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County's Virtual Youth Mentoring and Engagement Activities will continue their programs, offering Zoom and virtual assistance to any mentors, mentees, and mentees' families in need, including technology and training assistance.

- The Blair County Historical Society for their *First Frontier: A History of Blair County*, a new feature-length film on the history of Blair County, to complement their 2018 publication of *First Frontier: A Sesquicentennial History of Blair County*.

- The Door's "Windows To The Future" - The Door serves the needs of at-risk youth at their after-school home for teens in Bellwood. A final project for the home is to replace the broken windows that are unsafe, with labor being done by The Door's young men under the mentoring of a local contractor.

- Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation's After School Programs Quality Improvement to update equipment that is no longer able to be repaired. Access to technology, electronics and teaching tools that help effectively provide educational enrichment and homework support.
- John's Way Medical Equipment Ministry for The Perfect Fit to provide bariatric equipment in various sizes to accommodate numerous body sizes. Walkers, wheelchairs, and bariatric rollators will be purchased to add to their inventory of equipment.

As you can see, although no big celebrations this year, there are so many positive things happening at your Community Foundation of which we are so proud!



**Jodi Cessna**

Central PA Community Foundation

## Chamber programs pay tribute as part of Small Business Month

Sometimes you need to take the initiative to give credit where credit is due. That was the feeling of the Blair County Chamber staff when discussing ways to help the organization's many small businesses get through the difficult times caused by Covid-19.

"We decided to raise awareness of the important role that our small businesses play in our community," acknowledged Chamber President Joe Hurd. "So we took a little bit of liberty and declared November 'Small Business Month.' We didn't think anyone would mind and so far no one has."

November seemed like the logical time to make such a designation, since Small Business Saturday occurs later this month.

"We were convinced that one day of recognition was hardly enough," admitted the Chamber's Marketing VP Linda Stotler. "More than 85% of our membership is comprised of small businesses. They deserve some additional consideration. We felt strongly that we should do something special."

Stotler and Sales and Membership VP Jessie Covert developed a game plan that includes compiling a resource campaign showing the many ways that small businesses impact the local economy. Stotler and Covert also plan to randomly visit small businesses and shoot short videos that will then be posted on the Chamber's Facebook page.

"Visits that we've made in



Among the Mega Baskets that can be won just by submitting a selfie from a Chamber small business is the "Snack Happy Gift Basket Tower" which is 45-inches high. Mega Baskets will be awarded each Monday in November.

the past have been greatly appreciated," Covert noted. "It's too easy to forget sometimes the impact that these businesses make on our economy as well as on our quality of life. Under ordinary circumstances, we need to say thank you. During especially difficult times, it's even more important."

Perhaps the most profound promotion, however, is called the Mega Basket Giveaway. Four sizeable baskets, full of products from local small businesses, will be made available for people to win simply by taking a selfie at a small

business and submitting it for a drawing that will take place each Monday during November.

"The selfies will be posted on our Facebook page," Stotler pointed out. "People who plan to submit selfies can do so more than once, as long as their submissions come from a different business each time. The baskets are very impressive. We've had so many small businesses contribute products and gift cards to increase their value. Winners will need to have large vehicles to get their prizes home."

## Congressman Joyce to speak at breakfast

With the election in the rearview mirror, much remains to be considered, particularly as it pertains to how the results will impact the local business community.

To get the inside scoop from someone close to the process, the Blair County Chamber will have Congressman John Joyce as the keynote speaker at this Thursday's Breakfast Club, set for 7:45 a.m. at The Casino at Lakemont Park.

"We're honored to have the Congressman with us to talk about a highly volatile situation," remarked Chamber Board Chair Darin Tornatore. "The future of our county and our country are highly-dependant on the direction that things take from



**Congressman Joyce**

this point forward."

The cost to attend Breakfast Club is \$20 for Chamber members and \$30 for non-members. A buffet breakfast is included. To register, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com).

Corporate sponsor of the November Breakfast Club is L.R. Webber Associates.

**AT THE CHAMBER**

## It's Happening

■ The Digital Marketing Roundtable's Zoom program this Thursday will focus on "Instagram for Business." Speaker is Angie Yasulitis of The YaZo Group. It begins at 11:00 a.m. and lasts one hour. No cost for Chamber members; \$15 for non-members. To register, go to [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com).

■ The Sustainable Blair County Committee will meet tomorrow by Zoom. The committee is active in helping businesses to operate more sustainably and to possibly save money in the

process. The committee also works with local schools to help make young people more aware of the importance of sustainability.

Anyone with an interest in serving on the committee should contact Joe Hurd at [jhurd@blairchamber.com](mailto:jhurd@blairchamber.com).

■ Are you a non-profit business or organization that would like to get more involved in networking with other non-profits? Call Joe Hurd at (814) 943-8151 to learn more about the Chamber's Committee of Non-Profit Businesses.

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