

## INCITE

## Starting from behind

Last May, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce created an “Equality of Opportunity Initiative” that was largely in response to the unrest that was taking place in cities throughout the country following the killing of George Floyd. The Chamber invited other chambers to join the initiative if they were willing to convene a series of meetings to discuss ways to more effectively promote



**Joe Hurd**

Blair County Chamber

racial equality. Within a week, with the approval of our Chamber board, we signed-on. My interest in our involvement, however, was more than just to generate meaningful discussion along racial lines. Blair County also has challenges related to poverty and early childhood education that impact people of all colors where opportunities are concerned.

To begin the process, the first person I contacted was Don Witherspoon. I described the concept and asked for his input. Not only did he pledge his support but he agreed to apply for a trial membership with the Chamber on behalf of the NAACP. A key player was onboard.

With an anticipated kick-off of the Initiative set for late fall, other projects with high degrees of urgency seem to take center stage. Covid-19 was exacting a heavy toll. Certainly we could wait until after the first of the year to launch something new. What harm could there be?

I can recall, many years ago, listening to a homily from my parish priest entitled, “Man Plans and God Laughs.” Beyond the incredible loss to the community of a good man with an impressive history of accomplishment, the recent death of Don Witherspoon fit that homily to a tee. Our key player left a cavernous void.

Within the next few weeks, I’ll be reaching out to a number of people with reputations for getting things done in Blair County. The workforce challenges facing our region make it more important than ever that we spend appropriate time determining where and why inequality of opportunity has occurred and how we fix it. It won’t be easy.

Having attended my share of NAACP dinners and having watched Don Witherspoon present awards to young people of all races for making something positive happen in their school or their community, there is clearly a formula for getting started. I’m guessing that respect and self-esteem will have a prominent place within that formula.

I wish I knew for sure. I wish I’d paid closer attention. I wish Don Witherspoon was still here to show the way.

## Anna “thrilled” by wonderful opportunity

*Anna Marie Anna has more than twenty years of experience in hospital management. As President of Penn Highlands Healthcare Tyrone, the native of Patton, PA will draw on her certification as a Rural Hospital CEO to continue to provide quality services to Northern Blair County and beyond. The 56-year-old Anna has nursing degrees from Mount Aloysius College and Clarion University. She and her husband of 36-years have two grown daughters and twin granddaughters.*

**The Chamber: What level of confusion has been typical due to having the same first and last name?**

**Anna:** This made me laugh! Over the past 36 years I have learned it is best when asked my name to respond with, “my first and last name are the same.” This just helps prevent confusion. I have found over the years that my name ends up being a great conversation starter. And, just for fun I like to share that my Mother-in-Law’s name was also Anna Anna.

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

## Chamber Q&A

**Anna:** Although I don’t have time or opportunity now, I was a soloist for weddings from the time I was 14 years old. Singing was always a passion of mine.

**The Chamber: What opportunities do you see with the change to Penn Highlands Healthcare?**

**Anna:** I am thrilled to be a part of what I believe to be a wonderful opportunity for Tyrone and the communities we serve as we embark on our journey with Penn Highlands Healthcare. We will be strengthened as a rural provider by the talented resources that are already in place at Penn Highlands. Our journey will include growing underutilized services and add new services to meet the healthcare needs of our community and prevent our residents from having to travel out of the area for care.

**The Chamber: What challenges do you envision as the world readjusts to pre-pandemic status?**

**Anna:** I believe a big challenge will be to remind peo-



Anna Marie Anna, the president of Penn Highlands Tyrone, is a strong proponent of rural healthcare and gets great satisfaction from knowing that people in Northern Blair County don’t need to travel elsewhere to have their health needs met.

ple that it is safe to seek healthcare when needed. We implement and follow guidelines that are necessary to protect patients, visitors, and staff. And, we want people who need care to not take the risk of waiting and possibly cause further undo harm to themselves, but know that our guidelines and infection control practices are in place to protect you, your family, and our staff so that we can continue to provide the care that is needed.

**The Chamber: Who are your personal and professional role models and why?**

**Anna:** Personal role models for me have been the strong leaders I have worked with and for. Each have taught me bits and pieces of how to lead through good times and bad. I have been blessed to have worked with some very strong women leaders and they each possessed a “can do” attitude that encouraged me to continually strive to grow my knowledge and skills.

**The Chamber: What’s on Anna Anna’s “bucket list?”**

**Anna:** I would like to continue to work at growing the services at Penn Highlands Tyrone in order to meet the healthcare needs of the community. Continue to grow my knowledge of healthcare leadership and be a mentor to those who want to learn how to strengthen care in rural America. At some point retire and spend more time with my family traveling, boating, and fishing.

## Chamber’s Sustainability Committee looks to assist businesses as they address COVID-related challenges

The incredible number of obstacles thrown at the business community by Covid-19 includes those that affect the environment. A Chamber committee – Sustainable Blair County – has begun to look at ways to help businesses regain a focus on sustainability since new mandates have meant new strategies.

“It’s been an unusual time and one that continues to present challenges,” admits Donna Fisher, who has chaired Sustainable Blair County for the past two years. “Some of the things you do out of necessity solve one problem and create another. Our committee is looking at where those loose ends can be tied-up so that they don’t lead to more difficult situations down the road.”

To no one’s surprise, one

of the greatest challenges comes as the result of the ongoing restrictions impacting the restaurant industry.

“The amount of packaging material being used, particularly Styrofoam, for takeout and delivery orders has been amazing,” explained Don Delozier, a member of the committee who also happens to own two restaurants – Prime Sirloin and U.S. Hotel. We’re constantly looking for alternatives and I know other restaurants are as well but sometimes there are issues that rank a little higher on the priority list.”

Delozier is a strong proponent of using sustainable measures wherever possible as well as reducing waste.

“The restaurant industry has battled those issues for a long time and made some important inroads,” De-

lozier pointed out. “Our committee needs to identify more effective ways to help all businesses be more willing to step-up with programs and initiatives that make a difference.”

A number of businesses have already made changes. Rutter’s, for example, has recently introduced new paper coffee cups that replace their Styrofoam cups.

“Moving to a paper cup design will help us reduce our carbon footprint as we move into 2021,” disclosed Chad White, Rutter’s Food Service Category Manager. The move to paper cups that are made of 92% renewable resources and non-toxic materials is a continuation of the company’s environmental efforts.

“There are many success stories out there that our committee will be promot-



The Chamber’s Sustainability Committee is encouraging local businesses to use products like the one shown above.

ing to help others take a more thorough look at their own processes,” Fisher acknowledged. “We really believe that businesses want to be good stewards of our resources.”

Sustainable Blair County

currently offers businesses an opportunity to complete a survey that fleshes-out both the strengths and weaknesses of where they are environmentally. To access that survey, go to [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com).

## Chamber Board of Directors fills additional spots for 2021

The Blair County Chamber’s Board of Directors for 2021 is now complete.

New Board Chair Richard Fiore, with the approval of the board’s other seventeen members, selected Jessica Sprouse of Gwin, Dobson & Foreman, Inc.; Paul Randazzo of Mama Randazzo’s, Inc.; and Kirsten Stratton of KMS Interior Design & Home Staging, LLC to complete the 21-member board.

Sprouse was a member of the Chamber Board in 2020 and was elected to a second one-year term. She has also been a member of the Sus-

tainable Blair County Committee and will be joining the new Membership Committee that begins this year.

“Jessica brings a significant marketing background to our board at a time when promotion and marketing are among our organization’s top priorities,” Fiore acknowledged.

Randazzo also brings a critical element to the Chamber, according to Fiore.

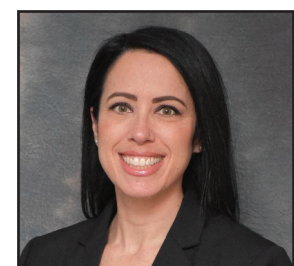
“One industry sector that we have identified as somewhat under-represented is restaurants,” he pointed out. “We’re hoping that Paul can



**Paul Randazzo**

provide some needed insight into how we can get more of our local restaurants involved.”

Stratton has been involved in a number of Chamber programs, including as chair of the Young



**Jessica Sprouse**

Professionals of Blair County.

“Kirsten knows what we’re all about,” Fiore noted. “She’s a graduate of our Leadership Blair County program and is highly regarded for her willingness



**Kirsten Stratton**

to step-up in helping the Chamber move its agenda forward. It’s also important that she represents a small business and can help us address the many challenges that our small businesses face.”