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Happy guests the goal of Jack & George's

Among the many neighborhood bar/restaurants in Altoona, perhaps none has built better name recognition than Jack & George's. Opened more than a half-century ago by brothers Jack and George Iuzzolino, the reputation for good food and drink and plenty of "Cheers-like" hospitality has never diminished.

"The Iuzzolino boys had a wonderful business," acknowledges current owner Terri White who will observe her 30th year at the helm on Christmas Eve. "They had a successful strategy for how to create an environment that made people want to come here. I've tried to follow that."

Terri has not only followed it, she's grown it. Jack & George's did a major expansion project a few years ago that not only created additional seating



but also made more room for food preparation.

"When I first started, there was only room for two cooks and a dishwasher," Terri pointed out. "Now we're able to increase our food business and offer greater variety."

Despite the expanded menu, Terri admits that her chicken salads, burgers and desserts are still the most popular selections "except on Friday's when fish takes over."

Like most local restaurants, Jack & George's has been heavily impacted by Covid-19. "I've gone

through a lot over the years but the Covid experience has definitely been the worst," she noted. "It's mostly been the uncertainty of knowing whether you are allowed to have customers in-house or need to do all takeout orders. It has taken adjustment but we've weathered through it. I'm very proud of how our crew has overcome this situation."

One member of that crew is Terri's daughter Jayle. She has watched her mother lead the battle to keep Jack & George's viable at a time when similar establishments have not fared so well.

"She doesn't complain about things she can't control," Jayle disclosed. "I've learned so much from her and I also know that I've still got a lot to learn."

Perhaps the primary lesson is how to handle peo-



Terri White, owner of Jack and George's, fills strawberry cheesecake cones.

ple. That's something that seems natural to Terri. "I like the people who come here," she stated. "I've

made some good friends. I also enjoy the business. It's been an honor to serve the wonderful people of

our city." (Jack & George's has been a Chamber member since 2011.)

The Gibson Agency helps clients to handle risk

Among the growing array of challenges that confront society in its recovery from a pandemic is how to adequately handle risk. And few industry sectors are higher on that list than insurance companies. Just ask Josh Gibson.

Gibson has three Allstate Insurance offices in Blair County – two in Altoona and one in Duncansville – and he is very succinct with his definition of what those offices provide.

"Our offices help people manage the risk that everyday life presents," he points out. "We offer solutions that provide the protection and peace-of-mind they need to deal with those uncertainties." The Gibson Agency insures its share of risk. It insures auto, home, renters, motorcycle/ATV, boat, and business, just to name a few. There's also an in-house specialist who works with clients on life insurance and retirement needs.

Under ordinary circumstances, the day-to-day interaction between agent and client is manageable. With Covid-19, the game plan changes but the expectations seldom do.

"From an industry standpoint, like any other business having to adapt to a



Josh Gibson has a degree in Architectural Engineering but a heart for insurance as evidenced by his three Allstate Insurance offices. Gibson has helped his clients to confidently face the challenges posed by Covid-19.

more virtual model, developing ways to handle claims remotely keeps us focused," Gibson disclosed. "We really enjoy the ability to have local, personal, face-to-face interaction with our clients as we discuss their concerns and needs."

To use a word like "enjoy" at a time of such turmoil might seem unusual for some people but not when dealing with Josh Gibson. His clients and employees both speak to his energy and enthusiasm for his work and his willingness to go the extra mile

at times when it's most difficult. Perhaps it's because of a career move that he made to satisfy a longtime desire.

The 42-year-old Gibson was born and raised in Altoona and graduated from Penn State with a degree in Architectural Engineering – Construction Management. Upon graduation, he moved to Lancaster and worked for a construction management company as a project manager. It was a perfect fit. Except it wasn't.

"I moved back to Altoona in 2005 when the op-

portunity came to operate my own business and be back home," Gibson admitted. "The insurance business has given me a chance to use some skills that I wasn't aware I had. I find it interesting and invigorating and being able to do it close to home is just a great thing. My wife and I have two sons (14 and 11) and I'm getting ready to start another year of coaching baseball."

"Really, what could be better?" (Allstate – The Gibson Agency has been a Chamber member since 2008.)

SETTING THE PACE

Sara Fiore-Gunnett WE-LEAd Committee

1. Title and place of work: Officer/Vice President/Controller - Leonard S. Fiore, Inc.

2. Positions held in the Chamber: Chairperson, Chamber WE-LEAd Committee.

3. Family: Married 20 years to Bill Gunnett, have two daughters Mary (Freshman at Pitt) and Nancy (8th grade at Bishop Guilfoyle's Pre-AP program).

4. Community organizations: Arc of Blair County, Current President, past Secretary; American Heart Association Blair Go Red for Women, current Executive Leadership Team, Past Chairperson; Blair County Chamber of Commerce.

5. Hobbies/leisure: Reading, art, crafts, puzzles, pinball and video games. Avid member of Point of Fitness, attend classes 6 days a week.

6. Education: Bachelor of Science and Master of Business Administration - Saint Francis University.

7. First job: Babysitting. I started babysitting my cousins when I was 12 after taking a training course through Blair Rec. I have a large family with lots of children, so there was plenty of work.

8. I would like to be known for: Being an extremely dependable person. I've had to learn recently to say "No" more often, because when I say "Yes", I truly give my all,



Sara Fiore-Gunnett

and unfortunately there is only so much time in the day.

9. Business role model: Amy Seltzer. She is one of the founding members of WE-LEAd and is a true advocate for women in the workplace. She has had great success in a male dominated industry and has been a genuine source of advice and inspiration to me for over a decade.

10. Your thoughts about the Chamber: The Chamber is a resource that all Blair County businesses should be utilizing for their own growth and that of their employees. All of their programs and events have been designed to enhance our businesses and community.

11. Your thoughts about Blair County: Blair County is the perfect balance of big city and small town. We have a great blend of businesses and a lot to offer those looking to make Blair County their home.

What you need to know about the vaccine

The controversial nature of the Covid-19 vaccine has caused the Blair County Chamber of Commerce to create an informational program this Thursday, March 18th from noon to 1:00 p.m. on Zoom. Entitled, "What You Need to Know About the Covid-19 Vaccine," the program will use a Q&A format featuring two of the area's most knowledgeable physicians.

Dr. David Burwell of UPMC Altoona and Dr. Daniel Nackley of James E. Van Zandt VA Medical

Center will answer questions submitted to the Chamber as well as those included in the Chat section of the Zoom. The deadline for people to submit questions is noon on Tuesday (to jhurd@blairchamber.com).

"We understand that there are people in our community who are still on-the-fence about getting the vaccine," acknowledges Chamber President Joe Hurd. "Many of them are hesitant to commit, either due to lack of information or from misconceptions that have arisen. We're hosting



Dr. David Burwell

this program to bring clarity to a situation that hasn't had an abundance of it since the vaccine became available."



Dr. Daniel Nackley

There is no cost to attend the program. To get the Zoom link and passcode, call (814) 943-8151.

Let us help you hire your next stellar employee!

As many Blair County businesses continue to gear-up for 2021 in terms of hiring, the Chamber's Job Board is beginning to see an uptick in employment opportunities. Some of the businesses posting positions have already used the Job

Board in the past and have had success. The Job Board is available only to Chamber members and there is no cost to post up to three positions. If you have something to post, send it to Gwen Query at gquery@blairchamber.com.

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