

Eichelberger has learned from role models

John Eichelberger has enjoyed a number of fulfilling careers. The 62-year-old native of East Freedom (Jugtown) has built a successful insurance business in Altoona, served as a Blair County Commissioner for 11 years and as a State Senator for 12. The Central High School and Penn State graduate is currently a member of the Chamber's Public Policy Committee. John is married to WTAJ reporter Charlotte Ames. His son Johnny is an attorney in Houston, Texas.

The Chamber: Describe Complete Insurance Services to someone unfamiliar with it?

John: We belong to the largest agency group in America, and have access to markets and programs that no other agency in our area can offer. From auto and homeowners policies to very complicated commercial, industrial and govern-

Chamber Q&A

mental risks, we can write them all and provide the personal attention our insureds enjoy and deserve. **The Chamber: What are the greatest challenges that the insurance industry deals with under ordinary circumstances and how did Covid-19 further impact that industry?** **John:** The industry has always grappled with global economic pressure, natural disasters, political unrest and civil court decisions that affect the balance between rates and profitability. The pandemic brought insurability issues concerning sickness in the workplace, loss of income due to closures, and other related claims. On a daily basis, many people in the industry are working from home, re-

sulting in reduced productivity and slowing down our ability to get information for clients. **The Chamber: What do you miss most about being a State Senator? Least?** **John:** Most - Having the ability to help shape good public policy, and regularly helping people with individual problems. Least - Battling false information on social media, dealing with an almost monolithic left-leaning media, and fighting the influence and money of public sector unions that prioritize their members' interests over the public good. **The Chamber: Who are your business and personal role models and what makes them special?** **John:** I've had a lot of people who have been instrumental in teaching me things over the years, from my parents, to business owners, ministers, colleagues in government, and friends; all have helped to shape my



John Eichelberger has successfully brought the same level of passion to the insurance industry as he did as a longtime County Commissioner and a three-term State Senator.

views and work ethic. **The Chamber: What would you hope your political legacy would be?** **John:** A Christian who always tried to do the right

thing without regard to personal or political gain. **The Chamber: What's still on John Eichelberger's "bucket list?"** **John:** I've been very for-

tunate in my life to have a supportive family, travel, and have fulfilling roles in many ways. I look forward to whatever the Lord brings my way.

Credit Control Collections helps people on all sides of the financial relationship

Steve Lewis knows a good business opportunity when he sees one. He knew it in 1979 when, as Senior Vice-President at Omega Bank, he agreed to lend money to a customer named Bill Miller who wanted to start a business called Credit Control Collections. And he knew it on November 1, 2000, when he bought that same business from Miller who had decided to retire.

"Bill had built an excellent business with a great reputation," Lewis acknowledged. "He was professional and willing to take all aspects of a situation into consideration before moving forward. We've tried to follow that example."

Credit Control Collections – "Your Bad Debt Collections Specialists" – is located at 2410 Broad Avenue in Altoona. Its mission is to exceed clients' recovery expectations while maintaining professional and respectful interaction with debtors. While it has a wide variety of clients from a host of industry sectors, there is one in particular that demands most of the company's attention. "We specialize in healthcare collections," Lewis pointed out. "In most cases,



Steve Lewis has gained an appreciation for the importance of professionalism and respect in dealing with people who are enduring financial struggles.

we're trying to collect money from people whose situations are beyond their control. We try to avoid adding to their problems so we work out payment plans that allow them to move on with their lives. We don't repossess, file judgments or harass people. Collection agencies often get criticized for being insensitive. We do our best to avoid that." Like a lot of businesses, Credit Control Collections has been impacted by the

pandemic. Lewis, however, looked for the silver lining and found it in a number of unexpected places. "It made us get more creative," he admitted. "Once we were required to have people work at home, we realized that could be a good thing. It made it possible to hire more people and expanded the pool of people who were more effective making calls from home." There have been other side-benefits, in particular

the availability of dollars becoming available for people to come current on their debts. "Between the stimulus programs and the fact that people were spending less money because of staying close to home, our company had a much better 2020 than we did in 2019. We couldn't have predicted that but we're grateful for how it's worked out." (Credit Control Collections has been a Chamber member since 2001.)

Leadership Blair County mixes adult, youth ideas



Among the participants in the combined session of LBC Adult and Youth are, (clockwise from left): Dominic Yanoshak (BG), Katie Whysong (CNB Bank), Katelyn Williams (BG), Kiersten Williams (Hollidaysburg) and Scott Robertson (Sheetz).

It is one of the most highly anticipated sessions for both the Leadership Blair County Adult Class and LBC Youth as well. "Getting the classes together for interaction and discussion over the course of an entire day has become a tradition that has really yielded some great information," reported Tami Chadwick, facilitator of the Youth program. "It also creates enthusiasm that the groups are not that far apart when it comes to the vision for our county."

This year's LBC Combined Session took place on March 11th at Altoona Area High School. It included discussions and presentations on topics like mental wellness, time poverty, harassment and human trafficking. There were team-building activities and more than a few opportunities to share hopes and fears.

"It was eye-opening," acknowledged Morgan Fochler of Ward Transport and Logistics, the youngest member of the Adult Class. "It wasn't all that long ago that I was facing some of the issues that people in the Youth Class are facing now. The perspective is completely different. This session

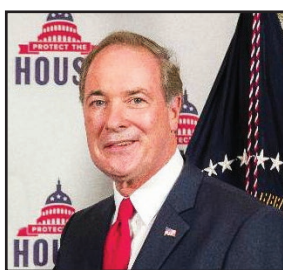
allowed us to see and hear the challenges that will likely define our county's future." Jaime Bianconi of Reliance Bank agreed. "It was interesting to hear what the concerns of the Youth Class are," Bianconi noted. "They are extremely creative and definitely process things a lot differently than we do. They're dealing with many of the same things that we are but a lot of different things too." Grace Broadrick, a member of the Youth Class from Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School, was pleased with how well the session went and how eager the adults seemed to be in looking for ways to offer insight. "The adults were inspiring in how they approached the topics that were part of the session," she disclosed. "They didn't speak down to us – they were genuinely interested in what our opinions were and how they could help. I left the session feeling like we had accomplished something meaningful." (For more information on either Leadership Adult or Leadership Youth, contact Gwen Querry at 814-943-8151 or visit the Chamber Website at www.blairchamber.com.)

Congressman Joyce to address Roundtable

Congressman John Joyce will address the Blair County Chamber's Executive Roundtable on Wednesday, beginning at 7:30 a.m. at The Blairmont Club in Hollidaysburg. "We're looking forward to hearing from the Congressman, particularly as it pertains to the many changes in Washington during the past few months that impact the ability of our business community to move forward," acknowledged Philip Devorris, CEO of Blair Companies

who chairs the Roundtable. "Even though we've seen evidence of some progress in getting businesses back on solid footing, we recognize that there's still much to do and it will be helpful to get some insight from someone who has been advocating on our behalf." Congressman Joyce was first elected to serve as U.S. Representative of Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District in November of 2018. He was reelected in 2020. He serves on the En-

ergy and Commerce Committee and is a member of both the Health and the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittees. The Executive Roundtable is comprised of CEO's of Blair County's largest businesses as well as college presidents and school superintendents. The group, which meets five times a year, has been instrumental in supporting initiatives that benefit the local business community. Devorris succeeded Denny



Doll of Reliance Bank in January as Roundtable Chair. For more information on the Executive Roundtable, contact Joe Hurd at jhurd@blairchamber.com.

