

Levine's successfully balance work, home

Blair County has been extremely fortunate to have a large number of family-owned businesses. Many of those businesses are comprised of several family members, often from more than one generation. The corporate ladder is dotted with people of the same last name.

Levine Engineering in Altoona is a family-owned business that's big on business, small on family. Tom is president of the firm, his wife Lisa is office manager. There are five "unrelated" employees.

"We're a close-knit group," Tom acknowledges. "Our professional engineers and staff have decades of experience in design, operation and maintenance of public infrastructure. Our reputation for accomplishment has been the result of having good people. It's a source of pride for us."

Levine Engineering, founded in 2009, currently provides general consultation to municipalities, mu-

Working Together

nicipal authorities, school districts, heavy industry as well as businesses throughout the Commonwealth.

"People may not realize that we provide service to clients as far north as Lycoming County, east as far as Mifflin County, south as far as Bedford County and west as far as the Pittsburgh region," Tom explained. "We also have a lot of repeat customers."

Tom handles all of the technical aspects of the firm and makes staffing assignments for various projects as necessary. Lisa handles all office-related duties as well as the reproduction, completion and distribution of copy used in the profession. It's a system that's been highly effective for a couple of simple reasons, Lisa believes.

"Communication and lis-

tening skills are essential to success in any relationship," she points out. "I've learned that the key to working with a spouse at the office isn't much different from learning to work with a spouse in a marriage. We must first have a deep trust and understanding of each other personally and professionally in order to be on the same team."

"It's necessary to interact with each other on a routine basis due to our own individual schedules/assignments. Therefore, we divide and conquer the responsibilities based on each other's strengths. Organization is another key factor. We set aside time, either in the morning and/or the evening – and most definitely on weekends – to review what is ahead for the week."

The primary lament of couples who work together seems to center around the inability to leave work at the office when the workday has ended. The Levine's are fortunate to have their



Working together has been an effective arrangement for Tom and Lisa Levine at Levine Engineering. The couple has built a winning strategy based on trust and understanding.

daughters – Abigail (27) and Gretta (19) and their granddaughters Gwendolyn (5) and Lily (2) living in the area.

"Owning a business is not a 9-5 job," Lisa admits. "It requires bringing work home quite regularly. It's

all about balancing work and home life, which I think we do well. Our daughters and our granddaughters are most important to us, therefore setting that boundary is imperative in order to maintain that balance."

Tom agreed.

"There are very few times that we have difficulty keeping things in proper perspective."

(Levine Engineers has been a Blair County Chamber member since 2009.)

Royce Boyd closes chapter on steering Young Entrepreneurs Academy program

Royce Boyd's decision four years ago to put her retirement on the back-burner proved to be a Godsend to the Blair County Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) program.

"She recognized that the program was still in the formative stages and needed someone to grab the reins and make it work," Chamber President/CEO Joe Hurd admitted. "Royce has a passion for helping young people accomplish great things. YEA! was right up her alley."

The longtime educator, who had last served as superintendent of the Claysburg-Kimmel School District, agreed to a one-year stint as YEA! Program Manager. One year would become four.

"It's been a wonderful experience," Boyd pointed out. "The program is great and the kids have been amazing. I could see myself doing this for a long time." Unfortunately, she had made a commitment to take a leadership role in Delta Kappa Gamma, an international organization of key women educators, and that commitment begins later this year.

"I really can't do both and do justice to either," Boyd acknowledged. "That's not something I could justify."

Carol Gensimore of Value



Royce Boyd (left) shares a moment with YEA! class member Anna Batrus at the recent trade show, held at PNG Field.

Drug Company, who chairs the YEA! Committee, appreciates Boyd's unwillingness to compromise the program.

"Royce has been the heart and soul of YEA! and the program has flourished under her leadership," Gensimore noted. "The incremental improvement that has occurred each year is the result of her insistence that things be done correctly and professionally."

Matt Stuckey, who has served as a YEA! instructor for all five years of the program, agreed.

"Royce was particularly effective during the chal-

lenges associated with Covid," he disclosed. "She made sure that the program never lost momentum and she built a great rapport with the students. That's not always easy to do."

Students like Zac Barton, a senior at Hollidaysburg, appreciated the motivation that the class received from Royce.

"She keeps pushing you," Barton explained. "She won't let you fail. She makes sure that you stay on track with your vision. A lot of us needed that."

Evan Petrunak, another Hollidaysburg student, offered similar comments.

"Royce is an amazing educator," he said. "She taught me so much and helped me to turn my idea into a profitable business. She was tough but we knew that she cared about us and wanted us to be successful."

If there is any good news about Boyd's departure as YEA! Program Manager it is that she has agreed to remain on the YEA! Committee, at least until the end of the year. That will make the transition to her successor much smoother. (The announcement of that successor was made Tuesday and a story will follow in the next Business Insight.)

Keystone Payroll is now a workforce solution



Cherryie Wisyanski, Payroll Consultant at Keystone Payroll, explains the concept of customization to a client.

In business, sometimes your name overstates your products and services. At Keystone Payroll, it's just the opposite.

Opened in State College in 1998 by current owner James Delong, Keystone Payroll specialized in payroll and tax processing. The company did those things so efficiently that it made the decision to dip its toes into other specialties. Today, it brands itself as "a total workforce solution." It offers business owners, large and small, a solution for all parts of their employee life-cycle – from hire to separation.

"We provide services for HR, Time and Attendance and Benefits," explained Kylie Crutchfield, Director of Sales & Marketing. "Not only that, we provide one-on-one training to insure that business owners can take full advantage of each solution."

While many companies in the region were heavily impacted by Covid-19, Keystone Payroll was one that actually was in a position to provide much-needed assistance.

"We had many clients that were put in difficult circumstances as the result of the pandemic," Crutchfield pointed out. "Fortunately,

we were able to provide them with information and knowledge about the constant changes to the tax laws as well as to any other changes that came about. They were very grateful for the support. Client service is a high priority for us."

Keystone Payroll's history more than validates that priority.

"We are a local company that has managed to expand to 39 states, just by word-of-mouth," Crutchfield acknowledged. "We set each company up from scratch. Everything we enter into our system for a new company is completely customized to their unique needs."

That customization has given Keystone Payroll the flexibility to build solid client relationships.

"We do payroll for businesses with one employee and those with 500 employees," according to Crutchfield. "Since we customize each platform per new client, we are able to only include what is necessary for each business without overwhelming them with services they do not need. Likewise, we are able to add services and grow with these companies as they expand."

(Keystone Payroll has been a Blair County Chamber member since 2002.)

WELCOME TO THE CHAMBER

Appalachian Running Company
3415 Pleasant Valley Blvd.
Altoona, PA 16602

Integrity Construction and Windows
1520 E. Walton Ave.
Altoona, PA 16602

Michael Kasun State Farm Agency
1635 E. Pleasant Valley Blvd.
Altoona, PA 16602

LaJo's Italian Sausage
1101 8th Ave.
Altoona, PA 16602

Rev. Evelyn Madison
Simply Clean Carpet & Upholstery Services, LLC
155 Lennys Drive
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Spring House Grille
7664 Woodbury Pike
Roaring Spring, PA 16673

Veterans Leadership Program
727 Goucher Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15905

CONTACT US

Blair County Chamber
814-943-8151
chamber@blairchamber.com

McCarty's

Workplace Solutions

Furniture • Supplies • Copiers

Support Your LOCAL Community!

- NATIONAL BUYING AGREEMENTS
- \$10B BUYING COOPERATIVE
- LOW LOCAL OVERHEAD
- PERSONALIZED CUSTOMER SERVICE

Let us help you **SAVE!**