

## DeCaspers eagerly seeking next adventure

Carl DeCaspers has never shortchanged life. At 81, the recently-retired PR/Media Director at New Pig Corporation is excited to move on to whatever the next chapter holds. He's got a tough act to follow when he looks back at where he's been. A Penn State graduate, Carl taught at a number of high schools and colleges, coached basketball at most of those and even spent two years in the Peace Corps in Senegal. In 1984, he left education for the business world when New Pig was nothing more than a big idea. Carl and his wife Linda have been married for 49 years and have two grown children and two grandchildren.

**The Chamber: Most people don't postpone retirement until they're 81. What has kept you invigorated and why is now the time to walk away?**  
**Carl:** New Pig provided the ultimate adventure. What is more exciting than being on the starting team

### Chamber Q&A

to help build a global organization? Attempting to be proactive at this stage in our lives, Linda and I decided to move to a Continuing Care Retirement Community near our daughter's family in Northern Virginia. Being near our granddaughters is the biggest draw.

**The Chamber: Moving from education to the business world can be a monumental leap. How comfortably did you make that transition?**

**Carl:** A leap for sure. Plunging into the business world was unknown and somewhat scary, but at the same time had its allure. Having jumped into other undertakings with some success provided a foundation for taking a calculated risk to be part of a new venture.

**The Chamber: What would people in Blair**

County be surprised to know about Carl DeCaspers?

**Carl:** Instead of going straight home from Senegal, a Peace Corps colleague and I spent 2 ½ months traveling throughout Africa, the Middle East and Far East.

**The Chamber: You had built a reputation as a successful basketball coach at the high school and the collegiate level.**

**Any regrets to putting aside that part of your life and how have you satisfied your competitive fire?**

**Carl:** No regrets. Not many people get an opportunity to experience two different careers. The odd thing is that my experience as a teacher/coach helped prepare me well for public relations and media responsibilities. In business, the competition is as fierce as in any sport. Striving to be the best in your industry is not much different than trying to win the BIG 10! New Pig celebrates its successes just like any team, but realizes it must improve to stay on top. I've been competing my entire life.



Carl DeCaspers has played a key role in the marketing and promotion of New Pig Corporation from the outset of the business.

**The Chamber: Who are your personal and professional role models and what makes them special?**

**Carl:** I've been blessed to have many people in my life to look up to, but my dad set a lasting example. An ex-Marine who served in WWII, he was a true gentleman who loved his fam-

ily and thought of others first. His work ethic and generosity left an indelible impression. He made sure I was working half days every summer from age 13 on. He had time for everyone and if you stayed around his store long enough, you would have seen almost everyone in

town. Professionally, John Wiberg was an extraordinary model as a teacher and coach.

**The Chamber: What's still on Carl DeCaspers' bucket list?**

**Carl:** Teach my granddaughters how to bunt. Visit all the wineries in northern Virginia. Get to North Dakota – that'll make all 50.

## Pyramid Engineering covers all the bases

Among the hidden gems in the Blair County business community is one that came about when three local architectural engineers decided to open a firm dedicated to MEP Engineering (Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing). Thomas Heasley, Jr., Eric Haugh and John Solarczyk started Pyramid Engineering in 2000 with the intention of providing clients with the most responsive and comprehensive services possible. The Altoona-based business is located at 300 Fifth Avenue.

"We recognized that Blair County is a good central location to serve Western/Central PA, Northern VA/MD and West Virginia markets," Heasley acknowledged. "We wanted to make sure that people were aware that we could cover a significant amount of territory."

Even the staff at Pyramid Engineering was a little surprised at just what that territory encompassed. The company has designed projects in Texas, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina and South Carolina. While the majority of their work is for building construction, they also specialize in feasibility studies, stadium/sports lighting and site electrical engineering.

"We have a diverse client



The Pyramid Engineering team consists of, left to right: Leetta Hockenberry-Associate, Tom Heasley-Principal, Leroy Henry-Designer, Joe Delosh-Mechanical Engineer, Eric Haugh-Principal and Karl Kessler-Electrical Engineer. Absent was John Solarczyk-Principal.

base established that includes architects, engineers, school districts, universities, healthcare systems, developers and contractors," Heasley pointed out. "We have employees who have been with us for more than fifteen years. Our goal is to hire and retain good employees, help them develop their skills and provide a good working environment for them." Aside from the owners, the staff consists of LeEtta Hockenberry, Joe Delosh, Karl Kessler and Leroy Henry.

Not all of Pyramid Engineering's work is long distance. Significant local

projects include the Blair County Courthouse historical renovation, the Hollidaysburg Library, Penn Highlands Community College at the Logan Valley Mall, DelGrosso's Water Park expansion, Penn State Altoona's Sheetz Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence and The Mill (the former Silk Mill currently in renovation/construction).

"We feel good about the opportunity to be part of making the local community so impressive through these projects," Heasley disclosed. "Our objectives have consistently been to provide the client with

quality designs through direct partner involvement from conceptual design through building occupancy, to provide them with well-coordinated construction documents through constant communication and to provide superior service by responding to questions and concerns in a timely manner.

"The regional market that we operate-in is very competitive. There are many firms doing good things. We need to distinguish ourselves in as many ways as possible." (Pyramid Engineering has been a member of the Blair County Chamber since 2008.)

## Prestash to keynote Chamber Breakfast

Transportation, particularly as it deals with roads and bridges, plays a key role in Blair County's economy. Businesses rely on customers having access, travel and tourism relies on visitors being able to move about. In both cases, the stakes are high.

So what will the next few months bring in terms of traffic disruptions? To answer that question, Tom Prestash, District Executive of PennDOT District 9, will be the keynote speaker at the next Blair County Chamber "Breakfast Club" this Thursday, June 10th, beginning at 7:45 a.m. at The Casino at Lakemont Park.

Prestash's presentation is entitled "Maneuvering Around the Cones." He will outline PennDOT's strategy for completing key highway and bridge



Tom Prestash

projects with as little inconvenience for drivers. He will also answer questions from attendees.

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

## Wellness Chat set to address suicide

Wellness covers a variety of important topics and the Chamber's Workplace Wellness Committee focuses on many of those through "Wellness Chats." The Chats are held the second Friday of each month. The next Chat, held virtually this Friday from 8:30 to 9:00 a.m., focuses on individuals who experience depression and suicidal thoughts.

The presenter will be Jacque Harpster from UPMC Crisis who will talk about The Columbia Light-house Project, which helps to identify risk and prevent suicide. There will be an opportunity for attendees to



ask questions as well as share their own experiences. "Mental and emotional health is a huge component of wellness," admitted Phyllis Baker, committee chair.

There is no cost to Chamber members to attend the Wellness Chats. Non-members can attend for \$10. To register and receive the Zoom link, go to [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com). Sponsor of this month's Wellness Chat is Healthy Blair County Coalition.

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