

## Smith's to receive Chamber's ACE award

Doug and Veronica Smith of Dry Creek Farm in Martinsburg are the 2021 recipients of the Blair County Chamber's Agricultural Community Excellence (ACE) Award. The award was started as a continuation and expansion of the Chamber's successful Farm Family of the Year Award, which was introduced in 1970. It honors not only farm families but agriculturally-oriented individuals, agribusinesses and non-profit organizations that promote agriculture. "The Smith's fit a number of criteria for the ACE Award," acknowledged Joe Diamond, who chairs the Chamber's Farm-City Committee. "Their outstanding reputation within the dairy industry as well as their community involvement makes them an appropriate choice."

Doug's parents bought the dairy business from his grandparents in 1976. He grew up working on the farm and then formed a partnership with his father

in 1990. Doug and Veronica purchased Dry Creek Farm in 1996 and eleven years later purchased a neighboring farm, adding additional acres to the home farm. The Smith's currently farm 400 acres, growing corn, alfalfa, wheat and hay. Over the years, the Smith's have grown the dairy business from a 30-cow farm in 1976 to a 250-cow operation today. Expansion has included a flock of 60 sheep being raised at a neighboring farm as well as an ag-bagging business purchased in 2020 featuring a fleet of silage baggers. Doug and Veronica have served on the PA Farm Bureau Committee. Doug has served on the Bedford Farm Bureau Co-Op Board of Directors for 16 years and currently serves as president. While the Smith's were building a successful business, they were also raising four children on their farm. Today, two of the youngest children as well as a son-in-law are actively involved in the

business. The Smith's also have two grandchildren, Anna and Lucas, who represent the fifth generation to enjoy life on the farm. "The Smith's absolutely epitomize the definition of a farm family," Diamond admitted. "All their motivations are done with the family in mind. That can be rare today." The ACE Award is not the only recognition that the Smith's have received. The farm won the 2019 "Dairying for Tomorrow Award For Animal Care," sponsored by the American Dairy Association. The award is consistent with the family's priorities. "Our family strives to be good stewards of the land and the animals that are entrusted to us," Doug pointed out. "We hope to be a positive influence in our community, a positive place to work for our employees and a business that promotes a sustainable agricultural industry. We consider it an honor to be selected to receive the ACE Award."



Doug and Veronica Smith will receive the Chamber's ACE Award at the November 10th Farm-City Dinner. The Smith's have an outstanding reputation in the Dairy Community.

### Farm-City Dinner to vary its menu

Out with the turkey, in with the lasagna. On November 10th, the Blair County Chamber's Farm-City Dinner will be held at the Freedom Township Volunteer Fire Hall beginning at 6:30 p.m. The dinner has traditionally been an event which featured a family-style turkey dinner. This year the emphasis is on dairy, in particular cheese,

as DelGrosso Family of Companies is catering a lasagna dinner. Guest speakers for the Farm-City Dinner will be Joe DelGrosso and Amy Mearkle of DelGrosso's who will talk about the influence that agriculture has had on the growth of their business. For tickets, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151.

## Chamber trip to Greece creates friendships

You never quite know what's going to happen when you travel with the Blair County Chamber. Just ask the twenty-four people who went on the Chamber's trip to Greece in the summer of 2018. "We just kind of clicked," acknowledged Jeff Long, who went on the trip with his wife Vicki. "We enjoyed one another's company and seemed to have many of the same interests. It made the trip much more fun." So much fun, in fact, that the group decided to get together for dinner on a regular basis. "I'm pretty certain that groups like ours have great intentions to get together and maybe it actually happens once or twice," remarked Sue Griep. "But we get together three or four times a year and in most cases all twenty-four of us are there. That's pretty special."

Especially since the group really didn't know one another prior to departing for the airport, remembers Donna Miller.



The group of travelers that went on the Chamber's Greece Trip in 2018 have made a habit of dining together on a regular basis.

"From the beginning we got along well," she noted. "By the time we got back we were friends. I really look forward to seeing everyone when we have our dinners." Walt Wall, one of the travelers, took the lead in making sure that everyone stayed in the loop. "When you travel as a group, even for a short

time, you often end-up bonding," Wall pointed out. "Most of the time it's a group of six or eight who stay together when the trip is over. Our group is unusual. We haven't lost anybody." The "Greece Group" is looking for opportunities to travel together once again. "We're kicking around some ideas for another

trip," Long disclosed. "A lot of us have been to several of the more popular destinations in the world so we're hoping to find somewhere that will be a new experience for everyone." They're looking at the upcoming Chamber trips and may even serve as a referral source for trips that the Chamber takes in the future.

### SETTING THE PACE

## Phyllis Baker Workplace Wellness Committee Chair

- Title and place of work:** Community Engagement and Fund Development Director, Blair Regional YMCA.
- Years with current position:** Seven.
- Positions held in the Chamber:** Workplace Wellness Committee Chair.
- Family:** Husband Terry, sister Mary Jo, two pups — Malachi and Oskar.
- Community organizations:** Board of Directors - Blair County Arts Foundation, Altoona Symphony Orchestra, Altoona Rotary, Catechist at Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Hobbies/leisure:** Running, reading, anything outdoors.
- Education:** Bishop Guilfoyle and Penn State University.
- First job:** Worked for Attorney Charles McAleer. Lasted one week. He said I talked too much and would turn off his hearing aids.
- I would like to be known for:** Someone who uses whatever talents God gave me in a positive way towards others.



- Business role model:** Attorney Mary Louise Casanave.
- Your thoughts about the Chamber:** The absolute way that the Chamber meets the needs of employers and employees in Blair County. There are opportunities for all to be enhanced and impacted through the vast majority of programs the Chamber offers.
- Your thoughts about Blair County:** It's the community of Blair County that makes living here awesome. Whether it be through business, sports, arts and leisure or spiritual, the needs are met. Plus you don't have to look far to see the beauty of our area.

### WELCOME TO THE CHAMBER

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Contact the Chamber at 814-943-8151 • [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com)  
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## Foundation changes lives

The Blair County Chamber, through its BASICS program, has been able to successfully offer career development opportunities to young people in our community. Those programs could only come about as the result of the generous support of individuals and companies who recognize their value and who contribute to the Blair County Chamber Foundation.

The Chamber Foundation provides tax-deductible ways to accomplish great things. The Chamber's Leadership Youth program is a shining example of a program that, through sponsorship dollars, helps create servant leaders but doesn't require that students pay to participate. If you'd like to learn more about the Chamber Foundation, contact Cindy Cessna at (814) 943-8151.



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