

## Jeff Kozak helps Labor Specialties to deliver

*As General Manager of Labor Specialties, Inc. in Tyrone, Jeff Kozak has played a significant role in the company's growth and diversification. The 62-year-old Kozak has been at LSI for the past 27 years and takes particular pride in the strong customer base and the dedicated staff that have moved the business forward. Jeff and his wife Sharon have two children (Ian and Jessica) and three grandchildren (Jude, Blake and Wyatt).*

**The Chamber: How would you describe LSI to someone unfamiliar with it?**

**Jeff:** We are a company that provides many services for varied customers. We are a digital print shop that offers mailing and fulfillment services. We recently added wide format printing that allows us to produce banners and signs. We also work with local manufacturers to provide production assistance. Packaging, product assembly, custom pallets and cartons are all part of

### Chamber Q&A

what we do.

**The Chamber: What would people in Blair County be surprised to know about LSI?**

**Jeff:** All the varied products and tasks we perform. The amount of printing and mailing and the extensive customer base that we maintain are all things that not everyone knows about. People may also be surprised that we deal with major manufacturers and service providers throughout a broad geographic region. We make a conscious effort to be a company that businesses of all sizes can feel comfortable utilizing.

**The Chamber: A lot of people insist that the days of using direct mail to do business have passed. What are they missing?**

**Jeff:** Mail cuts through the noise. It's delivered directly to whom you want to talk. If

done correctly, mail can be an effective advertising option. We offer variable data and imaging with our state of the art equipment that will enhance any mail piece. When targeting consumers, there are many options to ensure you are reaching the right people. A few of the selects are demographics, hobbies, gender, geography. Businesses can be targeted by descriptions, employee size, sales and more.

**The Chamber: How many employees does LSI have and has Covid-19 had an impact on your ability to retain them?**

**Jeff:** We are at 13 employees right now. Covid has affected us in many ways, but we are very fortunate to have loyal people. We recognize that staffing is a factor pretty much everywhere right now. We could never have met our customer's expectations during the pandemic without the commitment of the people who continue to understand and support our mission.

**The Chamber: Who are**



Jeff Kozak has been a mainstay in the growth of LSI, Inc. over the past 27 years. He sees bright things for the company's future.

**your personal and professional role models and what makes them special?**

**Jeff:** Dick Rounsley and Carl Babe. Both were special friends and mentors. They both taught me what was important in life.

**The Chamber: What's next for Jeff Kozak? For LSI?**

**Jeff:** For me...scaling back the day to day duties, but staying involved. We have capable, talented people at LSI that will be glad when

I'm not under foot. LSI will always be on top of technology as it can apply to products or services for our customers. We recognize the importance of always looking for more creative ways to do things.

## Bolger Funeral Home continues long history of compassion and care during difficult times

As the list of industry sectors impacted by Covid-19 continues to grow, one of those sectors that has had to adjust on the fly is the funeral industry. And in many cases, those adjustments are having some long term effects.

"Like everyone else, we've had our challenges," acknowledges Bill Helsel, owner/president of John K. Bolger Funeral Home, which has homes in Martinsburg and Williamsburg. "We've done our best to adhere to the regulations while being sensitive to the feelings and preferences of the families."

Among the changes associated with Covid have been ones that haven't necessarily improved the experience, either for the families or the funeral homes, according to Helsel.

"No longer are traditional funerals 2-4 and 7-9 (for viewings) with the actual funeral the next day," he explained. "Families have been requesting one day for both viewing and funeral. Also, in our little neck of the woods, it seems that families up until Covid were using churches more often for all services."

"Since Covid, many families are choosing to do either private services or no services at all. That's made it truly disheartening to watch how hard families



Bill Helsel (left) and Alan Dodson comprise a formidable team at John K. Bolger Funeral Home in Martinsburg.

wrestle with what to do. My hope is that we can get to the point again that we as a society can play a proper tribute of respect to our deceased loved ones."

John K. Bolger Funeral Home has been a pillar of consistency for many years. The Bolger Family established the Martinsburg location more than 120 years ago. The Williamsburg location has a nearly 50 year history. When Helsel purchased the homes from John K. Bolger, he made the decision to continue the Bolger name.

"Why fix something that

isn't broken," he pointed out. "I worked for John Bolger for about fourteen years. He was a dedicated and caring public servant who taught me the importance of being devoted and compassionate in an ever-changing industry."

Since becoming owner, Helsel has acquired more parking for the funeral homes and for downtown Martinsburg. He's established a comprehensive website which has become an extremely useful tool as the business has pursued more creative and imaginative ways to increase the number of non-traditional

funeral celebrations. And he hired Alan Dodson as his Funeral Director.

"Alan is a tremendous asset to what we do here," Helsel disclosed. "He's currently getting to know the families that we serve in our two proud communities. He understands the role that we play in helping our friends and neighbors navigate through one of the most difficult times in their lives. We take great responsibility in being there every step of the way. We always will."

*(John K. Bolger Funeral Home has been a Chamber member since 2005.)*

## Public Policy committee addressing housing crisis



Cheryl Johns, Executive Director of Altoona Housing Authority, speaks to the Public Policy Committee.

How many crises can a community deal with all at one time?

That's a question that the Blair County Chamber's Public Policy Committee might be asking itself as it moves from staffing to housing to whatever comes next.

"There's no shortage of issues that need to be addressed," admitted Chris Michelone of McQuaide Blasko, who chairs the committee. "In many ways they're connected. Certainly staffing and housing are. There are supply chain issues and healthcare issues and issues related to tax-

ation. Our committee has a full plate."

To begin discussion of the housing topic, the committee invited Cheryl Johns, Executive Director of the Altoona Housing Authority, to attend the November meeting. Johns gave an overview of her role in maintaining an effective operation.

"Like everyone else, we have our challenges," she acknowledged. "We've also got success stories of people moving out of our facilities and buying houses. We're seeing more instances of that taking place. We're very encouraged."

## Businesses encouraged to test drive the Chamber

The Blair County Chamber continues to look for ways to grow its membership.

"We recognize that our ability to assist the community, especially during difficult times, depends heavily on having a large number of engaged and supportive businesses," explained Jessica Sprouse of Gwin, Dobson & Foreman, who chairs the Chamber's Membership Committee.

To attract new members,

the Chamber continues to offer three-month Trial Memberships to non-members at no cost.

"Once people see what all the Chamber does and what the benefits are, Trial Members usually become full members," Sprouse pointed out.

Interested businesses should contact Jessie Covert at (814) 943-8151 or email her at jcovert@blairchamber.com.

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