



What all we've lost

With the City of Altoona's annual Christmas Parade only a few days away, it's impossible for anyone who has ever been associated with that event to not have a heavy dose of mixed-emotions.

The parade has grown in participation and appeal and has helped the City to rally the community at a time when good feelings and high tension are often at loggerheads.

Many individuals and organizations have played key roles in making the parade a highly-anticipated night out. Planning and coordination can be tricky and requires someone with exceptional leadership skills to pull it all together. We've been fortunate. We've had Pat Miller.

As parade organizer, Pat had the advantage of never having lost his "little boy enthusiasm" for the pageantry of the holiday season. He loved watching the wide-eyed wonderment of young people to the bright lights and the seasonal music and the highly-anticipated arrival of Santa. For one night each year, despite all of our challenges, nothing else mattered.

Three weeks ago, the parade master unwittingly gave us the opportunity to show what we've learned. Pat Miller's death was a vivid example of a two-prong tragedy: Sadness at losing such an incredible person; trepidation at recognizing what his passing would mean to the long list of organizations that relied so heavily on his energy and expertise.

The need for a new parade organizer is the small tip of a very large iceberg. The wealth of knowledge that Pat brought to every table in which economic development, cultural heritage or governmental practice was the topic made others shake their heads in near reverence. He was the consummate resource, willing to share his opinions but never in an unprofessional way. He was far too nice a guy for that.

If you attend the parade on Thursday, you will probably not notice much of a change from the parades of the recent past. As parades go, it will be top-notch. Not because the planning void has already been filled. Instead, true to form, Pat Miller had all the details tied neatly in a bow, well in advance of anything that might disrupt it.

Those of us – and there are many – who knew Pat Miller well, recognize that his passing represents an opportunity for others to step-up. It's seldom easy to find new heroes. It will be especially difficult this time.

Shadowing provides valuable insight

"Career Shadowing has been a tremendous help to our kids. It's validated the interest in particular careers for some and caused others to change directions. The Career Fairs are good but actually spending time at a particular business is usually more beneficial."

Betsy Baker knows of what she speaks. As superintendent of Spring Cove School District, she understands the urgency associated with helping students to find their career direction. "Career Shadowing removes a lot of the uncertainty," she emphasizes.

Each year, the BASICS Committee of the Blair County Chamber holds Career Shadowing Week for all high school juniors in Blair County. Due to Covid-19, that event was cancelled in 2020. Two weeks ago, it was restored and included opportunities for both juniors and seniors. More than 300 students participated.

"When we set our date for this year, we held our breath," acknowledged Judy Rossi, a retired educator who has coordinated the planning and execution of Career Shadowing for all fourteen years

that the program has existed. "We felt that students who missed it last year needed to have a chance to catch-up. We weren't certain until Career Shadowing Week actually began that it would happen at all."

Rossi and another retired educator, Leanne Sidney, took the lead in contacting employers and coordinating an outstanding group of school contacts. Despite the collective efforts, this year's Career Shadowing Week was anything but smooth sailing.

"Overcoming the challenges and hurdles that Covid presented and is continuing to present was difficult," Sidney pointed out. "We lost host sites at the last minute and continued to have students drop out because they tested positive. We worried about the student exposure to Covid at work sites and work site exposure to infected students that are asymptomatic."

Another significant hurdle was the fact that the primary industry sector requested by students to shadow was healthcare. Not surprisingly, that sector was the most inaccessible.

"The circumstances with healthcare were unfortu-



Parker Gardner (left), a junior at Hollidaysburg Area High School gets some on-the-job training at J.V. Meadows & Sons.

nate," Rossi admitted. "One healthcare facility required students to be 18-years old, another required that students were vaccinated and two others cancelled shadowing opportunities that were already set up because Covid was running rampant in their facilities." Still, the overall value of the Career Shadowing Week experience was well-documented.

"I've heard so many posi-

tive comments from our school contacts who are in the trenches with the students," Rossi noted. "The students complete a Reflection Form about what they liked and didn't like about the shadowing experience. There was a great deal of enthusiasm from this year's group. Hopefully, it will translate into some good opportunities as these young people process what

they've learned."

Sidney agreed. "I've had a number of emails from students thanking me for finding specific placements for them," she disclosed. "They're very grateful for our efforts. Sometimes it's impossible to find host businesses for career choices that don't really exist here. Perhaps, in the future, we can have students identify more than one field of interest."

Stultz Real Estate makes home buying and selling a family affair



John Stultz (seated), who started Stultz Real Estate in 1975, enjoys working with sons J.P. (left) and Matt.

When John Stultz opened his real estate business in 1975, he envisioned a time when the business would experience significant growth and be able to attract the type of leadership that would allow him to take a more diminished role. He just didn't know that the leadership component would come from within his immediate family.

Stultz Real Estate in Hollidaysburg is an independent real estate office that is a full service brokerage offering listing and sales, property valuation and property management. From the two agents that John Stultz started with in 1975 has emerged a staff of 31 agents, 3 fulltime appraisers, 2 appraiser apprentices and 3 property managers.

Stultz Real Estate is co-

Working Together

owned by John's two sons – Matt and JP. Matt is the Broker of Record for the brokerage; JP handles the Rental Management. Both also do valuations for lenders, attorneys and homeowners.

"Matt and JP have brought so much to this business," John acknowledged. "They've expanded with more agents and are able to help more clients achieve home ownership. I'm also very proud that they started the appraisal business and expanded our property management business."

Working with his sons has had many benefits for John. It's also had a few

blips along the way.

"I get to see them every day which is a great thing," he pointed out. "Of course there are challenges as we all have our opinions on certain aspects of the business. I'm a bit old school and I recognize that they bring the online and tech aspects that keep us on the cutting-edge in this ever-changing business."

At times when issues don't get resolved quickly, the strategy usually amounts to a father and sons powwow. "With disagreements, we can usually sit down over lunch and iron things out the best we can for our employees and our business. That's really been a good recipe for success."

(Stultz Real Estate has been a Blair County Chamber member since 1994.)

Chamber Board elects six for returning terms



Rebecca Crilly



Leslie Estep



Richard Fiore, Jr.



Donna Fisher



Randy Frye



Jessica Sprouse

The Blair County Chamber's 2022 Board of Directors is rounding into shape.

At its November 18th meeting, the Board approved the reappointment of three current board members who were eligible for second three-year terms, two current board members who were eligible for first three-year terms as well as current board chair Richard Fiore, Jr. who is now officially in that same role for a second year.

Beginning a second term in January are Rebecca Crilly of Reliance Bank, Donna Fisher of Blair County Conservation District and Dr. Randy Frye of Saint Francis University. Beginning first terms are Leslie Estep of Tyrone Area School District and Jessica Sprouse of Gwin, Dobson & Foreman.

Fiore's appointment was the result of a need to make three one-year appointments to the Board, technically "board chair appointments." Those appointments will be made and likely approved at

the December Board of Directors meeting.

After all approvals have been made, only three current board members will not be returning for 2022. They are Sarrah Lyons of Mill Hill Farm and Darin Tornatore of Keystone Environmental, Health & Safety Service, whose terms expire and Stephanie Doliveira of Sheetz, Inc., who declined a second term.

Other than Fiore, the remainder of the Chamber's Executive Committee of the Board will need to be approved at the December meeting. The Executive Committee is comprised of the board chair, the board chair-elect, the treasurer and three vice-chairs which oversee the various divisions of Chamber committees. There is also an immediate past chair position but that position is only a one-year appointment that is in play only after a change in leadership.

(For information on the Chamber Board, contact Joe Hurd at 814-943-8151.)

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