



## The Great Cereal Caper

My daughter McKenna loves Rice Krispies. As a 22-year-old college senior enjoying the latter stages of “living at home,” McKenna still has access to the weekly grocery list. And very often that list includes, usually in bold letters, Rice Krispies.

I’ve never really had a problem with accommodating a person’s request for a breakfast cereal. Sooner the grocery store than the liquor store. But just when I began to feel confident that supply chain issues weren’t likely to complicate those aspects of my life of which I am most spoiled, disaster struck.

Five grocery stores. No Rice Krispies. I understood the panic associated with the toilet paper shortage of 2020. But what the heck happened to the Rice Krispies? I tried to contact Kellogg’s directly but was unable to get more than a recording thanking me for being a valued customer.

A Google search only partly shed light on the situation. Kellogg’s was in the throes of an employee strike that had lasted more than two months and didn’t seem to be ending any time soon. Certainly this had to be the reason why Rice Krispies were nowhere to be found.

Not so, claims Kellogg’s. Despite the strike, production was not impacted to the extent that anyone’s Rice Krispies were being used as a bargaining chip. As I continued to troll the cereal aisles, I noticed that other Kellogg’s cereals were still on the shelves, including the iconic Kellogg’s Corn Flakes. Even the Rice Krispies Treats were in ample supply.

Two weeks ago there was a breakthrough. The Altoona Giant Eagle had a limited supply of Rice Krispies in “holiday colors.” Being a responsible citizen, I purchased only one box. In retrospect, I should have grabbed them all. Because I haven’t been able to find them anywhere since. Being a responsible citizen as it turns out, isn’t all that it’s cracked-up to be.

Twenty years ago, when I was far less likely to be fixated on stupid things like the availability of breakfast cereal, I would have let this issue die and moved-on to something more important, like remedies for receding hairlines. Instead, I’m exploring supply chains and pestering wholesalers with questions that they have no interest in answering.

So where are the Rice Krispies and when will we see them again?? I’ll be sure to let you know.

## Biesinger’s success tied to staying busy

*Linzi Biesinger’s career in cosmetology has practically come full circle. The 53-year old Duncansville native graduated from Hollidaysburg Area High School and studied at Pittsburgh Beauty Academy and Sassoon Academy. However, Linzi received much of her extensive training at Altoona Beauty School. Today she’s president of that school. Linzi and her husband Mike have two daughters – Tia’ and Shae – and a dog Juju.*

**The Chamber: How would you describe Altoona Beauty School to someone unfamiliar with it?**

**Linzi:** We offer post-secondary education in the Beauty Industry: Programs, Cosmetology, Esthetician, Nail Technician, Makeup, and Teacher Training. We offer continued education for licensed professionals to keep up with current trends. (Eyelash Extensions, Lifts, Brow Lamination, acrylics, Dips, waxing, etc.) We have a student salon and spa that we offer services to the public. We currently have twelve employees.

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

**Linzi:** The majority of our

## Chamber Q&A

students come from outside the Blair County Area. They commute or move here to attend classes.

**The Chamber: Describe Linzi Biesinger’s typical work day?**

**Linzi:** Social media posts, checking voice mails, emails and mail. All administrative duties – order supplies, oversee staff. Teach classes when scheduled; cutting, coloring, makeup, or lashes.

**The Chamber: How has your business changed most dramatically from the time you first started?**

**Linzi:** Advertising for sure. With the internet, websites, social media, reviews – it is so different how we attract prospective students. The students themselves are different too. Their learning styles and abilities are vastly different. We have to use many varieties of teaching methods to reach them and instill education.

**The Chamber: How did Covid-19 impact your ability to keep the business running?**

**Linzi:** It was extremely difficult and scary to be shut



Linzi Biesinger, President of Altoona Beauty School, has kept the business running smoothly despite challenges from the pandemic.

down completely for three months. Our staff scrambled to continue classes virtually so not to hinder students learning and keep them enrolled. Our industry had never been able to do online classes as we are a hands-on industry. We were able to do theory classes online within one week of closing. Our instructors basically ran the education while I kept the building going and paid the bills. Once we were permitted to re-open we had to follow many protocols that added to the cost of doing business.

We still follow many of those to date and have had a much better year.

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

**Linzi:** Personal: My Dad (Andy) taught me hard work and taking risks to achieve your goals. My Mum (Susan) taught me the value of a dollar and money management. Professional: Betty James (founder of Slinky) was a wealth of knowledge and a great female business woman. Willard Campbell (founder

of Hoss’s) encouraged me to value and treat employees well as they are the reason for a business’s success. Many other school owners in the American Association of Cosmetology Schools whom I have worked with over the years have also played an important part. **The Chamber: What’s still on Linzi Biesinger’s “bucket list?”** **Linzi:** I want to get back to traveling the world and learning new cultures. COVID had stopped that temporarily. I’d also like to write a book.

## Nomination period is underway for 2022 Annual Meeting Awards

While 2021 contained many of the same challenges as 2020 for the Blair County business community, it also uncovered its fair share of success stories and the people who made those stories happen. On January 28th, the Blair County Chamber will recognize a number of those people.

The Chamber’s Annual Meeting & Awards Presentation provides an opportunity for the Chamber to lock back at the accomplishments of the previous year, install its new board of directors and the board of the Blair County Chamber Foundation and then call-out volunteers who in some meaningful way made a positive impact on the county’s ability to do business better.

“It’s always a much-anticipated event,” acknowledged Richard Fiore, Jr., who chairs the Chamber Board. “Even pre-pandemic it was a gathering that made people feel good about what had happened during the previous year and feel optimistic about what was to come. The pandemic only heightened



At last year’s virtual Annual Meeting, Marty Malone of P. Joseph Lehman presented the Chamber’s Spirit Award to Debbie Eckenrode of Farmer’s Insurance.

the importance of doing something with a positive spin.”

There are seven awards to be presented that morning (they are listed below). Anyone – Chamber member or non-member – is eligible to nominate. Nomination forms as well as descriptions of the awards themselves are available on the Chamber Website at [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com) or at the Chamber Office, located in the Devorris Center for Business Development. The deadline to

nominate is December 31, 2021.

“We’re hoping to get a considerable number of nominations, as we usually do,” Fiore pointed out. “These awards touch many important aspects of what makes our region a great place to do business. We also appreciate the many businesses and organizations that step-up to sponsor these awards. They also play a critical role.” (Call the Chamber at 814-943-8151 to register for the Annual Meeting.)

## Chamber subcommittee creating symposium on Early Childhood



Rodney Green, chair of the BASICS Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education, discusses opportunities with committee member Shawna Hoover.

A critical by-product of the hiring crisis that is taking place throughout the country is the frustration that early childhood providers are feeling in attempting to keep their doors open.

“With all the normal challenges that providers deal with in attracting and retaining staff and assuring that children are safe and well cared-for is the uncertainty surrounding the workforce,” explained Rodney Green, who chairs the BASICS Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education. That Chamber subcommittee looks at ways to help providers and parents to meet the needs associated with getting young people off to a good start educationally.

“We recognize that there

are struggles taking place,” Green pointed out. “In too many cases, the kids are caught in the middle at a time when their greatest ability to learn is passing quickly. But I also believe that there are opportunities for us to look differently at how childcare can evolve more efficiently.”

Green and his subcommittee have begun to look at ways to address the childcare dilemma and are planning an event for early 2022.

“Similar to the event that BASICS hosted in November on healthcare staffing, we’re putting together a symposium that would identify the key elements of the childcare challenge,” Green noted. “We’re confident that we can make a difference.”

## Chamber Annual Meeting Awards

- Joseph P. Rosenhamer Chamber Spirit
- ATHENA
- George
- Donna D. Gority Servant Leadership
- Small Business Person of the Year
- Judith A. Rossi Educator of the Year
- Young Professional of the Year

**Download nomination forms at [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com) or call the Chamber at 814-943-8151.**