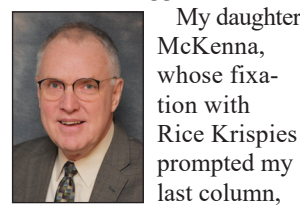




Thanks Jean! It's all good

While I have no hard-and-fast rules for this Hurd Immunity column, I do try to avoid discussing the same topic two columns in a row. I'm guessing that for some readers, once is more than enough.

My last column, however, generated more reaction than I had anticipated. My question, "Where are the Rice Krispies?" set-off a host of scavenger hunts that I'm certain would have brought a chuckle to the folks at Kellogg's.



Joe Hurd

Blair County Chamber of Commerce My daughter McKenna, whose fixation with Rice Krispies prompted my last column, has been the recipient of her favorite cereal, some in holiday wrappings, from likely and unlikely sources. While she's getting the snap, crackle and pop, her father is getting the calls, texts and emails. A few sounded similar to the UFO sightings that I remember from the 1960's.

"Saw a box at Aldi's but when I turned around to add them to my cart they were gone," one emailer confided. "Haven't seen a box since."

"Checked at three different stores. Even went to the Dollar Store. They always have them. Not this time though," a lady reported to my office.

"Would your daughter eat the generic stuff?" another caller wanted to know. "It tastes just about the same and it's much cheaper. I can get you all of that you'd want."

It didn't even stop when I attended Mass. A gentleman I've seen many times pulled me over as I was walking down the aisle and in a fairly-secretive tone let me know that he saw a box at Hometown Market but wasn't sure they'd still be there.

"You'd better go get them now," he advised.

Perhaps my favorite came by way of a voicemail message left early on a Saturday morning from a retired teacher named Jean.

"I was just in the Duncansville Martin's and I saw several boxes. I didn't want to be greedy so I only took two. I'll drop them off." Two days later she did just that.

As I thought about the incredible number of people who had reached out, simply in response to a newspaper column, it hit home that the topic of the first column was not the same as the topic of this one. The first column was about Rice Krispies.

This column is about kindness. It's amazing what you can find when you're looking for something else.

Chamber, PeopleOne find common ground

The Blair County Chamber is excited to introduce a new program now available to all members struggling to deal with the rapidly increasing cost of healthcare in our region.

"We've continued to search for healthcare opportunities for our small business members that were affordable and easy to access," acknowledged Chamber President Joe Hurd. "PeopleOne Health checks both those boxes."

PeopleOne Health is a first of its kind direct-to-consumer medical practice alliance featuring the top medical providers in the Blair County area. By allowing employers to directly pay providers for their employee's care, it's like buying medical wholesale instead of retail. A large component of insurance plans costs involves the processing of insurance claims for the medical provider to be compensated. That costs medical practices almost 50% of their time and overhead.

PeopleOne offers more than primary care with essential services including an onsite dietitian, pharmacist, social worker, bloodwork, telemedicine visits (both pri-

mary and extended specialist) as well as the most commonly needed acute generic medications. Prime network enhancements include Imaging services (x-rays, CT Scan, MRI), Physical Therapy, Cardiac and Pulmonary testing, a comprehensive list of no cost generic medications, behavioral health/addiction screening, personalized health coaching and care navigator for every member.

PeopleOne Health in Altoona, created by founders Dr. Zane Gates and Patrick Reilly, has recently been recognized as a leader in the industry as a healthcare model for the future. Winners of the Pittsburgh Business Group on Health (PBGH) Innovation Healthcare award in 2019, they recently completed a merger with Spark360, a national leader in wellness, behavioral change and technology services that enhance member benefits even further.

"The healthcare model was built on putting the patient at the center of everything, not insurance, so they have introduced the new combined company name as PeopleOne Health to reinforce who is the most impor-



Bill Thompson, Jr., an investor in PeopleOne Health, discusses the program with Jill Dumin, Director of Sales and New Member Growth.

tant person in their mission: the individual community members they serve," Reilly pointed out.

Chamber members would receive PeopleOne Health services at large group pricing discounts that are normally available to employer groups over 250+ employees. PeopleOne Health has created a new plan offering for small group plans centered around the federal

government's new ICHRA regulations that can help businesses pick a budget that is affordable to them, eliminate many out-of-pocket costs for employees, and pick the out-of-pocket limits they choose.

"It was important to (the Chamber) that we not only entered into a partnership that discounted products and services for our members but also kept local providers

involved in the process and encouraged local brokers to help sell it," Hurd explained. "We were involved with Pat Reilly and Dr. Gates in our previous affiliation with Empower360 and know them to be outstanding people. We look forward to working with them again."

Any interested Chamber-member businesses should contact Jill Dumin at (814) 330-5400.

Next generation of entrepreneurs awarded patent for innovation



Parker Gregg (left) and Cayden Wright, two Central High seniors, were successful in getting a patent for carbon monoxide detectors for cars.

Entrepreneurship continues to be a high priority of the Blair County Chamber. So the Chamber was pleased to learn that two Blair County students had not only started a business by creating a product, they had also won a national award with that product and on November 23rd were approved for a patent.

Central High School students Parker Gregg and Cayden Wright teamed-up to build a carbon monoxide detector for automobiles. The idea was born out of tragedy – Parker's father had died four years ago from carbon monoxide poisoning involving a car. Parker was determined to turn the situation into something positive.

"Rather than dwelling on how terrible the situation was, I decided to see if I could fix it," he acknowledged. "I got an idea for a

detector and I called Cayden. He's the brains behind the project and he's got experience with this sort of thing."

Much of that experience, as it turns out, is with the Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) program. He graduated from the program in 2017 – YEA!'s first year.

"That program helped me tremendously," Cayden admitted. "It allowed me to use some technology tricks and even helped me in some of my college essays. The people in my YEA! class were extremely helpful in my thought process concerning business development. I was ready to help Parker move his concept forward."

The two fledgling inventors spent a considerable amount of time bouncing ideas off one another.

"We started out with some buttons and switches



and just kept playing around," Cayden pointed out. "We wanted to make the connection from Parker's brain to my hands. Ultimately, everything fell together."

It took three years to go through the patent process. With the patent secured, the next step is to market the product to an interested party.

"We're looking to sell the patent to an automobile manufacturer," Parker explained. "As Cayden and I prepare to head to college next year that seems to make the most sense. Our names stay on the patent. That's a source of pride for both of us."

Chamber Board elects new slate of officers



Rebecca Crilly



Richard Fiore, Jr.



Donna Fisher



Randy Frye



Clark Stapelfeld



Kirsten Stratton

The Board of Directors of the Blair County Chamber elected its slate of board officers for 2022 at its December 16th meeting.

Richard Fiore, Jr. of Leonard S. Fiore, Inc. was re-elected for a second term as board chair as was Clark Stapelfeld of New Pig Corporation as board chair-elect.

Becky Crilly of Reliance Bank, who has been treasurer of the Board for the past two years, has agreed to remain in that position for an additional year.

"Covid has thrown some unusual financial challenges our way during the past eighteen months," remarked Chamber President Joe Hurd. "Becky has done an incredible job keeping things

together. This would not be the best time to make a change in that position."

The three vice-chair positions will experience change. The only returnee from 2021 will be Dr. Randy Frye from Saint Francis University who had overseen the Promotions/Events Division and will now move over to the Education Division. Sarrah Lyons had been the vice-chair of that Division but her term on the Board expired in December.

Promotion/Events is now in the hands of Kirsten Stratton of KMS Interior Design & Home Staging. Donna Fisher of Blair County Conservation District is now the vice-chair of the Communication/Advocacy Division.

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