

## Imperfect perfection

*"Harrisburg is full of people who mean well."*

Bryan Cutler, Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, said that during his remarks at the recent Chamber Day at the Capitol. I think it was supposed to make Chamber people feel better about State Government. It clearly missed the mark.

Cutler would have been better off saying, *"We're far from perfect but at least we're not the federal government."* That would have earned him a standing ovation.

I'm not sure how many Chamber Days at the Capitol there have been. At least fifteen for sure. As an antique, I've had the opportunity to attend all of them and I've learned a lot. And much of what I've learned has been hard to forget. Believe me, I've tried.

I recall former State Senator John Eichelberger telling me that during his first term in the Senate, he felt like he needed to take a shower every time he left the Capitol. It was clearly not meant to speak to his commitment to hygiene.

This year's Chamber Day seemed far more upbeat than usual. Thanks to a pandemic, the Commonwealth is awash in money and the Budget and Tax Policy session was more cheerful than informative.

*"People have been buying more taxable items so our revenues have been exceptionally strong,"* explained Matthew Knittel, Executive Director of the Independent Fiscal Office. *"Corporate profits and pass-through profits are also strong but they can't continue."*

That last piece of bad news will surely be the focal point of next year's Chamber Day. In the meantime, let the good times roll.

The best part of Chamber Day 2022 was the presentation on workforce. Three speakers very passionately explained some viable options for expanding the talent pool in Pennsylvania. Sheila Ireland of the Department of Labor & Industry spoke about immigrant labor; Brigadier General Maureen Weigl explained the role that veterans can play; and Dorenda Hamarlunk of the Department of Corrections provided data on the availability of previously incarcerated people who bring skills and training to the workforce. Employers would be well-served to embrace all of these groups.

As I listened to stories from a few of my chamber colleagues about the struggles they've had getting their elected officials onboard with supporting Chamber initiatives, it occurred to me that our Chamber has little to complain about. Senator Ward and Representatives Schmitt and Gregory have been approachable and supportive.

That's far more important than just "meaning well."



**Joe Hurd**

## Farm-City Committee sets 2022 plans

One of the Blair County Chamber's longest standing committees is gearing-up for a busy 2022.

The Farm-City Committee, whose mission it is to promote agriculture to people in the county, has set an agenda for the next several months.

"We've got some ideas on some new things and some ways to fine-tune some of the things that we've been doing," explained Committee Chair Joe Diamond. "People in our county want to learn more about agriculture since it's still our number one industry."

The first opportunity to create some awareness is at this Thursday's "Business After Hours" that will be held at NatureWorksPark in Hollidaysburg. Since June is Dairy Month, committee members will be providing ice cream sandwiches to attendees. Interested people can also contribute to a fund that provides milk to be distributed by American Rescue Workers.

"We're not doing our Cones For a Cause this

summer so we're hoping that people will help us offset the money that was raised by that promotion in the past," Diamond pointed out.

Instead of Cones For a Cause, the Farm City Committee will have a float in the 40th Annual Martinsburg Parade on July 12th. Again, the purpose is to promote agriculture.

"At most of the events that we do throughout the year, we get to see a lot of the same faces," said Sarah Lyons, a committee member. "That means we have a large number of loyal supporters. It also means that we don't always have the opportunity to make new people aware of what we do. We're hoping that the parade will give us some additional exposure."

On August 31st, the committee will hold a Visit to Industry at Woody Lodge Winery. More details will be available in a few weeks.

The next Farm-City event is the always-popular "Down on the Farm" which will be held on October 6th. This officially kicks-



The Blair County Chamber's Farm-City Committee is finalizing plans for a number of fall events that will help promote the importance of agriculture to our local economy. Members of the Committee are, left to right, seated, Kristy Bigelow, Shana Stern, Donna Fisher, Valerie Detwiler. Standing, Katie Lipko, Sarrah Lyons, Janet Hines, and Joe Diamond. Absent from photo are Ashley Hicks, John Black, Lindsey Bennett, Blaine Smith, Andrew Ritchey, David Hileman, Judy Black, Amanda Walker, Jeff Hackenberg, Sherri Socie, and Amy Webster.

off Farm-City Month. The location of Down on the Farm has not been determined.

"We have so many outstanding farms in our county that are willing to

host that we attempt to move the location around so that all people have accessibility," Diamond stated. "This event is truly one of the Chamber's most family-friendly."

The Annual Farm-City Dinner is November 2nd at Freedom Township Fire Hall. That dinner includes the presentation of the Agricultural Community Excellence (ACE) Award.

## Altoona Rotary Club assists local non-profit community



Debbie Dellaposta (left) and Traci Naugle of the Rotary Club of Altoona review the list of grant recipients from Grapes for Good.

As any organization that does fundraising will tell you, it's not easy coming up with something new. But sometimes a good idea can become a great idea by a fortunate set of circumstances. Just ask the Rotary Club of Altoona.

Prior to 2018, a group of Rotarians had discussed the idea of doing an Art & Wine event as a fundraiser. "In fact we jokingly called it 'Rotary's Snobby Wine Event,'" acknowledged Debbie Dellaposta of Doing Better Business.

In 2017, Dellaposta attended an event in Hagerstown, Maryland called "Grapes for Girls." The event was chaired by her sister Beth. "She was willing to share the basic format with us and then we were able to build off it," Debbie noted. "And Grapes for Good was born."

Grapes for Good is an el-

evated dining experience. Certified Sommeliers and Celebrity Sommeliers choose wines to pair with each course of the dinner. "If we're lucky enough to get a winemaker, we use their wines and the winemaker provides information and education about the wines and the region," Dellaposta reported.

Tables/tickets for Grapes for Good are sold only via sponsorship. There is also a silent auction. "We've had numerous, generous donations from Rotarians to auction in between each course," Dellaposta said. "People have really stepped up."

The impact has been impressive. In the four years that the event has been held, \$129,633 has been raised. Twenty-seven non-profit organizations have received some level of funding. Fourteen of those

were funded during 2022 and last month checks were presented for a total of \$26,133.99. All in a day's work, according to current Rotary President Traci Naugle of the law firm of Forr, Stokan, Huff, Kormaniski and Naugle.

"The object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service," she pointed out. "One of the avenues of service is through community service in which we, as Rotarians, find ways to improve the quality of life for people in our community. We see raising money and distributing it to non-profit organizations in our community as a way in which we can do that."

"There continues to be a lot of need within our community so we will continue to find ways to help."

*(The Rotary Club of Altoona has been a member of the Chamber since 2016.)*

## Business After Hours goes to outdoor venue at NatureWorksPark



NatureWorksPark is Blair County's first environmental specific outdoor education and recreation area.

A long-awaited Business After Hours opportunity is finally coming to fruition.

NatureWorksPark, located at 108 Bedford Street in Hollidaysburg will host this Thursday's After Hours from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The Blair County Conservation District, which oversees the Park, had been scheduled to host the event in 2018. Mother Nature, unfortunately, failed to cooperate.

"It was rained-out, rescheduled, rained-out, rescheduled and rained-out again," reported Chamber VP Stacy Hoover. "We're anticipating good weather so that people can see and expe-

rience what a really beautiful place this is."

The event includes a number of family-friendly activities for all ages including farm animals. Feel free to dress casually.

"While you're there, be sure to take a walk and explore nature on the wetland boardwalk," Hoover encouraged.

The cost to attend is \$10 for Chamber members and \$20 for non-members and includes food and beverages. Children 10-and-under can attend free. To register, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com).

## Business Before Hours provides dual pleasure

The next Chamber "Business Before Hours" will give attendees an opportunity to learn about two businesses instead of just one.

The Altoona Area Public Library and PA CareerLink will co-host the event this Thursday from 7:30 to 9:00

a.m. at the Library, located at 1600 Fifth Avenue in Altoona. There is no cost for Chamber members to attend. Non-members can attend for \$10.

To register, visit [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com) or call (814) 943-8151.



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