

Cove Forge a haven for hope and healing

When a community brags about its assets and amenities, it seldom includes its substance abuse facilities. Blair County should probably start.

Cove Forge Behavioral Health System opened in rural Williamsburg in 1984. It treats adults who are afflicted with substance abuse disorders and co-occurring mental health conditions. On a national level, it's considered one of the best.

"We are a beautiful campus-like setting at the base of a mountain," acknowledges Chief Executive Officer Bobbi Jo Glunt. "We are a place of hope and healing and treat addiction and secondary mental health diagnoses. We are able to detox individuals, provide residential treatment and if step-down services are needed, we have a partial hospitalization level of care."

While what Cove Forge offers is important, how it is offered is just as important, according to Glunt.

"In reality, it's about how passionate our staff is in helping individuals treat their disease," she pointed out. "They work very hard to get individuals into treatment. They go the extra mile to help anyone in need. Secondly, our size is a factor. We have a total of 288 beds and typically run at a 95%-plus capacity level. We have a staff of 250.

"Lastly, addiction does not discriminate. We treat individuals who are homeless, individuals who have supportive families, the jobless, those who are employed and everyone in-between. We do not treat bad people. We treat people who have made bad decisions and we help them get well."

The rehab process can be both simple and sophisticated. The staff monitors the treatment completion rates daily. They monitor length of stay, as success rates are greater for individuals who have longer treatment. Cove Forge has

several licensing bodies to which it is accountable as well as managed care organizations. It has internal committees that meet on a regular basis to review and discuss procedures, types of discharges, and any parts of the process that may need changed or eliminated. The landscape of rehabilitation is constantly changing.

"The acuity of the patient has changed dramatically over the past 20 years," Glunt admitted. Drugs such as Fentanyl and Methamphetamines are popular drugs of abuse and cut into other drugs, making them more potent. Fentanyl is very powerful and withdrawal effects are severe. Methamphetamines can cause paranoia or psychosis, which makes it hard to treat."

The next 20 years, Glunt believes, will require similar strategies to what appears to be having success now.

"I'm confident that Twelve Step Recovery and support groups will always provide



Bobbi Jo Glunt (left), CEO of Cove Forge, discusses procedures on the benefits of Sublocade with Clinical Supervisor Wendy Koehle.

a great source of stability," she noted. "I think as research on the effect of drugs and alcohol on the brain continues, we'll see the development of medications and treatments that can re-

pair damage, minimize the consequences of abuse and help one to stay sober.

"In the meantime, facilities like Cove Forge can take pride in the many accomplishments associated

with our work. We get calls all the time from people letting us know that we've made a difference in their lives." (Cove Forge has been a Blair County Chamber member since 1991.)

ATHENA recipients commit funds, ideas to aid business women



Cheryl Johns (center), ATHENA Award recipient in 2009, shares a memory with Judge Jolene Kopriva (1994), left, and Betsy Lehman (2011).

It started with a request from Amy Mearkle of Del-Grosso's Amusement Park, the 2016 recipient of the Blair County Chamber's ATHENA Award, that past ATHENA recipients contribute a few dollars to help the Chamber Foundation in its effort to fund the Leadership Blair County Youth program which helps high school sophomores – both male and female – to understand and appreciate the concept of servant leadership.

From there, Cheryl Johns of the Altoona Housing Authority, who won the ATHENA in 2009, suggested that an invitation be sent to all past honorees to attend a luncheon on June 28th at Park Hills Golf Club simply to talk about the importance of women in business and maybe identify some other ways to make a positive difference.

"It was nice to get people together who have had the honor of receiving this prestigious award," Mearkle pointed out. "And we were able to raise \$1,000 to assist with the costs associated with LBC Youth."

There may be an additional benefit to assembling such a highly-motivated group of people, predicted Becky Stevens of Seltzer Financial Strategies, the most recent ATHENA honoree. Stevens also serves on the Chamber's WE-LEaD Committee which creates programs and events for business women.

"The (ATHENA) group seemed to have an interest in ways they can support what the Chamber is doing to assist business women," Stevens acknowledged. "There was discussion about serving on panels for educational programs and potentially even having a role in mentoring women that could benefit from simply having someone to contact when issues come up."

For now at least, the ball goes to WE-LEaD's court to determine how such an accomplished group might be able to function as a resource.

"WE-LEaD has done some outstanding things for business women," Mearkle noted. "We look forward to supplementing their efforts if they need us."

ATHENA Award Recipients

- 1988 - Patricia Gildea
- 1989 - Edith Walker Isacke
- 1990 - Sandra Albright
- 1991 - Donna Gority
- 1992 - Margaret Hopfl
- 1993 - Zoe Bellamy
- 1994 - Jolene Kopriva
- 1995 - Jeanne Hanlin
- 1996 - Betty James
- 1997 - Judy Boerger
- 1998 - Sylvia Schraff
- 1999 - Gwendolyn Patillo
- 2000 - Bobbie Miller
- 2001 - Patricia Stoner
- 2002 - Elizabeth Doyle
- 2003 - Carolyn Donaldson
- 2004 - Ann Benzel
- 2005 - Sister Mary Ann Dillon
- 2006 - Dr. Lori Bechtel-Wherry
- 2007 - Nancy Campbell
- 2008 - Janice Freehling
- 2009 - Cheryl Johns
- 2010 - Jackie Bernard
- 2011 - Betsy Lehman
- 2012 - Debra Dellaposta
- 2013 - Amy Seltzer
- 2014 - Kate Shaffer
- 2015 - Diane Meling
- 2016 - Amy Mearkle
- 2017 - Charlene Dodson
- 2018 - Carol Gensimore
- 2019 - Maria Brandt
- 2020 - Judy Ward
- 2021 - Judy Juda
- 2022 - Rebecca Stevens

Retirement Plan Solutions helps diminish the burdens of business



Amanda Johnston, Director of Retirement Plan Administration at Retirement Plan Solutions, has big goals for the company's future.

As the volatility of the stock market continues to create headaches for those in the business community, a local company that assists businesses in weathering the storm has made some considerable changes to give their clients the best chance of long-term success.

Retirement Plan Solutions is a third-party administration firm that eases the burden that businesses have when maintaining a retirement plan.

"The rules and regulations are complex and we have the expertise to ensure that these arrangements are compliant with all tax and labor laws," explained Amanda Johnston, Director of Retirement Plan Administration. "From being able to draft legal plan documents, to performing required testing and preparing tax filings, we've got it covered."

The company recently took a major step to broaden its services by affiliating with Webber Advisors. The move, according to Johnston, will be a great advantage to both firms.

"Our affiliation with



Webber Advisors happened very organically," she pointed out. "As both our organizations continue to grow, it became clear that a partnership would allow us to build a diversified, world-class consulting firm. Webber is a full-service employee benefits, property and casualty, retirement and human resources firm. By adding our Third-Party Retirement Plan Administration into that mix, we're truly able to meet any organization's employee benefit needs."

Early results have been positive.

"The relationship, to this point, has proven invaluable," according to Johnston. "Being part of an organization whose ideals align so closely with ours has allowed us to continue

to be on the leading edge of retirement planning. Having the support to be able to stay ahead of the curve with new regulations on the horizon will allow us to be truly innovative in the solutions we can provide employers.

Nick Sefchok, co-owner and managing partner at Webber Advisors, agrees.

"The affiliation allows us to interact with employees every step of the way through the benefits process," he emphasized. "We can maintain a high level of coordination and provide the guidance they need to make truly informed decisions. Both firms coming together will immensely enhance the employee benefits experience."

The long-range plan, Johnston believes, looks even more promising.

"While we can already boast that we're one of the largest pension administration firms in the Central Pennsylvania region, I truly believe that in ten years we'll be able to say that we're one of the largest on the East Coast," she stated. (Retirement Plan Solutions has been a Blair County Chamber member since 2007.)