

HURD IMMUNITY Coming home

A recent study by the U.S. Census Bureau and Harvard University found that by age 26, more than two-thirds of young adults in the United States lived in the same area where they grew up, 80% had moved less than 100 miles away and 90% resided less than 500 miles away.

That's particularly encouraging to a county like Blair



Joe Hurd

Blair County Chamber of Commerce

coming back.

Rather than doing extensive research to validate or discredit spurious sources like Harvard, I decided that my own three children would be a random sample in a way that most researchers would consider shameful-but-expedient.

My oldest child – Brennan – is 26, living in Hollidaysburg and working in Cambria County. He is getting married next summer and plans to raise his family here.

My youngest child – McKenna – is 22, living with her loving parents and promising never to leave either the home of her loving parents or Blair County. As a recent graduate of Penn State with an art degree, McKenna is in the final stages of an apprenticeship at a local tattoo shop. I have promised her that I will allow her to tattoo me “right before my embalming.”

So that leaves my middle child – Delaney – who is 24 and has been living in Bethlehem, PA for the past two years. She has done exceptionally well as a recruiter for an Allentown firm that has promoted her and seems quite impressed with her potential.

Delaney enjoys the many lifestyle opportunities that the Lehigh Valley offers. My wife and I have visited there a number of times and have each commented on how great it would be if Downtown Altoona had the same vibrant spirit that seems to exist in Downtown Bethlehem.

After last Saturday, we no longer had to wonder. We attended both Hoopfest and the African-American Heritage Festival, each in a different part of Downtown Altoona. To see the large number of people and experience the enthusiasm and the great outreach by the business community was tremendous.

Some terrific things are happening in Blair County. Young people are beginning to notice. How do I know? To further skew the Census Bureau's data, Delaney is moving to Hollidaysburg next weekend.

Happy times!

Lexington Clubhouse fills great need

There is little doubt that mental health challenges exist throughout the world due to a number of factors. Covid-19 is one of those factors but it's far from the only one. Just ask Cindy Harmon.

Harmon has worked in the mental health arena for the past five years as director of Lexington Clubhouse, located at 911 Lexington Avenue in Altoona. Lexington Clubhouse is a psychiatric rehabilitation program within UPMC Western Behavioral Health of the Alleghenies. The clubhouse model is recognized everywhere as an evidenced-base practice.

“Today there are more than 300 accredited clubhouses worldwide,” Harmon pointed out. “Ours is one of 21 in Pennsylvania. We're proud of what we've been able to accomplish here.”

Those accomplishments occur within a framework of 37 standards in ten categories: Membership, Relationships, Space, Work-Ordered Day, Employment,

Non-profit Focus

Education, Functions of the House, Funding, Governance and Administration.

“Lexington Clubhouse is a safe place for people with similar mental health challenges to facilitate their own recovery,” Harmon explained. “Participation in the clubhouse is completely voluntary. Members come and go when they want and they choose how they spend their time while they're at the clubhouse. Nobody can be ordered to attend clubhouse.”

The Work-Ordered Day is from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. During that time, staff and members work together to complete the tasks that need completed. There are two work units – kitchen and clerical. Members choose their work unit and the tasks they want to complete.

“All of the work involved in the daily operation of the clubhouse is meaningful,” according to Harmon.



Lexington Clubhouse members (from left) Helen, Rick and Ivy clean up and sanitize after lunch.

“The combination of working with others, getting the work done and having fun while we do it creates an opportunity to practice being part of something despite having mental health symptoms. We can't eliminate mental health symptoms but we can teach people how to live a productive life and

manage them.”

One of the most daunting challenges facing Lexington Clubhouse is financial. Its total operating budget relies on the Medicaid reimbursement for the psychiatric rehabilitation services provided. The reimbursement rate is one of the lowest in the state.

“To be clear, there is no cost to the member to at-

tend clubhouse,” Harmon emphasized. “One does not have to have Medicaid to attend. We're fortunate that the Blair County Department of Social Services provides reimbursement for members not covered by Medicaid.”

(Lexington Clubhouse has been a Chamber member since 2019.)

Phase Two: Business women heading to the driving range



Becky Stevens, a member of the Chamber's WE-LEAD Committee, gets some pointers from John Madey, owner of Blair County Golf & Driving Range.

It was just about a month ago that the Blair County Chamber's WE-LEAD Committee held an instructional session for business women at Park Hills Golf Club. While that event was more about listening and watching, the intention was to follow up later with some actual swinging and hoping.

Later, as it turns out, will be on August 16th from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Blair County Golf & Driving Range in Hollidaysburg. And swinging and hoping will be augmented by eating and drinking.

“We wanted to create an event for women to actually hit some balls and have some great food, some adult beverages and an opportunity to network,” explained Sara Fiore-Gunnett. “Several women brought clubs to our last golf event and really didn't need them. This time they will.” Even



though the driving range will provide clubs to those who don't have them. There will also be three instructors on-hand to help participants feel more confident in learning the fundamental aspects of hitting off the tee.

“We're looking forward to having a large turnout,” acknowledged John Madey, who owns the driving range. “One of our missions as a business is to grow the game of golf for women.” He has seen plenty of indications that it's already happening.

“Ten years ago, I would sell 25-30 sets of clubs to women in a year,” he noted. “Now it's 75-plus. Business women in particular recognize the real value of the golf course

as a business tool.”

The WE-LEAD event, called “Teeing It Up,” will feature a buffet meal provided by Holland Brothers supplemented by a variety of beverages from Levy Brewery.

“Hollands will be supplying pulled pork, pulled chicken, au gratin potatoes and salads,” Fiore-Gunnett pointed out. “Levy has some great products that have become popular throughout the region.”

The cost to attend “Teeing It Up” is \$35 for Chamber members and \$45 for non-members. Space will be limited. To reserve a spot, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com. Corporate sponsor of Teeing It Up is Seltzer Financial Strategies.

(WE-LEAD is an acronym for Women Encouraging Leadership, Education and Development.)

SETTING THE PACE

Nicholas Sefchok

1. Title and place of work: Managing Partner at Webber Advisors.

2. Years with current position: 2 years.

3. Positions held in the Chamber: Chamber Board of Directors, Leadership Blair County, Member of President's Forum.

4. Family: Married to Danielle Sefchok (Capriotti), with 4 kids Cameron (9), Lyla (8), Nina (4), Willa (newborn).

5. Community organizations: Member of the Jaffa Shriners, Member of the CFA Institute and Pittsburgh Society of Financial Analysts.

6. Hobbies/leisure: Reading, fishing, traveling, spending time with family (especially on the baseball field with my son Cameron).

7. Education: Graduated from Hollidaysburg Area High School, Graduated Summa Cum Laude from Juniata College with a degree in Finance.

8. First job: Wilshire Associates - Investment consulting firm based in Santa Monica, CA and Pittsburgh, PA. Conducted investment work for large pension funds, endowments, family offices, and foundations.

9. I would like to be known for: When I am gone, I would like to be known for a few things:

1. A great leader, 2. A great father and husband and 3. Someone who always gave back to his communities.

10. Business role model:



My business role model was my dad. He was extremely hard working and honest. He always put the interest of his clients and co-workers ahead of his own.

11. Your thoughts about the Blair County Chamber:

The Chamber has been a key component to our firm's growth over the last few decades. The Chamber has provided networking, marketing, and other advisory opportunities. In addition, I have seen the Chamber help improve the business conditions and economic development within the community, which has led to a better quality of life for everyone impacted.

12. Your thoughts about Blair County: Blair County is a wonderful place to raise a family and/or own a business. I believe there are many underrated aspects including the arts, culture, business opportunities, recreational activities, strong community, skilled labor/talent pool, and quality education.

Contact the Blair County Chamber

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www.blairchamber.com

Facebook@The Blair County Chamber



Join us for our Seafood Social-August 5th 4pm-7pm
Free Samples!



814-317-5302

114 Hollidaysburg Plaza, Duncansville, PA 16635

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