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Lost Leaders

As a proud graduate of the Class of '72 at Hollidaysburg Area High School, I eagerly anticipated my class's 50th reunion, held a few weeks ago.

The Class of '72 was not one that distinguished itself in ways that transcended time. There are no monuments on school grounds that pay tribute to lofty achievement. No one from our class walked on the moon or played in the Little League World Series.

Yet the Class of '72 was far from ordinary. Many of our class members excelled in a variety of pursuits, while in school and after graduation. Our athletic teams had been, for the most part, mediocre. That really didn't matter. Our career trajectory pointed sky-high.

The class reunion itself was a revelry of accomplishment. More than a hundred graduates attended. It was profound validation for the school district and for the many outstanding teachers who played a significant part in student success. For an area like ours, it was all you could ever want. Except it wasn't.

For more than half the attendees, it was a chance to return to a place that they had once called home. It brought people from all parts of the country. Of all the things they might have had in common, the most obvious is that once they left, there weren't enough good reasons to return. Or at least good opportunities.

Sound familiar? It should. The great lament of people in our region is that despite the incredible job that is done in preparing young people to make the transition from wide-eyed neophytes to productive adults, it too often benefits some other fortunate community. In human capital, sad to say, we're great exporters.

From the Chamber of Commerce perspective, we continue to attack the problem from two vantage points. Our BASICS program spends time and resources on helping to promote careers that already exist locally so that future job-seekers can get a better sense of what to prepare for if staying close to home is important. And we work with ABCD Corporation to recruit employers to the area that offer family sustaining jobs.

As far as my classmates are concerned, I expect to see some of them again and not just at reunions. A number have already retired and have not ruled-out coming back to a place they know. A place that's safe and still very familiar.

That would be fine too.

Meeting patient needs from "Heart to Sole"

The holistic approach to patient care has been a concept that some providers have attempted but not many have achieved the desired results. At least not to the degree enjoyed by Central PA Physicians Group.

standing reputation in the region for cardiac and vascular assessment.

"Many in our communities are not aware that complex vascular procedures are performed in the comfort of our office," Dr. Khoury explained. "With

Central Pennsylvania Physicians Group

Founded in 2010 by Dr. Ziad Khoury, FACC, the Group has grown from a small three-person office to four locations: Altoona, Roaring Spring, Patton and Everett. It employs more than 40 and has expanded into a multi-specialty practice by offering services in cardiovascular care and podiatry/wound care.

"Our providers use the holistic approach and have used it effectively," acknowledged Dr. Khoury, who has been in the Altoona area for the past 23-years. "We offer treatment options for high cholesterol/lipids, AFIB as well as for Cardiac Rehabilitation and a PAD Walking Program. We are the only providers in the area that offer complete Cardiovascular and Podiatry care in one office setting. If a patient presents with a diabetic foot ulcer, he or she might also be at risk for cardiovascular disease. We provide treatment for both using a complete evaluation from 'Heart to Sole.'"

Central PA Physicians Group has built an out-

thoughtful preparation, we can accomplish many procedures in the office effectively and safely. Our staff is compassionate and ensures that the patient receives utmost care and comfort."

That staff consists of Michelle Dunio, CRNP, Jordan Luther, PA-C and Kellie Wilson, PA-C from the cardiovascular side and Gerald Gronborg, DPM and Jacob Carmichael, DPM from the podiatry side. Not all the services are confined to the offices as Dr. Khoury feels an obligation to take his show on the road.

"We offer offsite blood pressure and vascular screenings at different locations throughout the year," he pointed out. "Sometimes that's at a workplace as part of a wellness program for the convenience of the employees. Our Group also participates in several different community programs. We work closely with Blair Regional YMCA with the Y's Race Series. Our staff actually participates in many of the races to help promote



The Central PA Physician's Group staff consists of, left to right (seated): Dr. Jacob Carmichael and Dr. Gerald Gronborg. (standing): Kellie Wilson, Dr. Ziad Khoury, Michelle Dunio and Jordan Luther.

health and fitness."

Like most healthcare providers, Central PA Physicians Group faced challenges associated with Covid-19. While it wasn't an experience he would love to confront again any time soon, Dr. Khoury was pleased that the practice gained from being flexible.

"We had to get creative with how to treat patients," he disclosed. "We used programs such as Telehealth and Chronic Care Management while continuing to see patients in the office. We followed and applied the CDC guidelines and everything worked out. "As we move forward,

it's our intention to grow and offer additional services. We're pleased that our staff is able to provide excellent, compassionate and personal service. We never intend to deviate from that."

(Central PA Physicians Group has been a Blair County Chamber member since 2014.)

Joe Keller to receive 2022 Excellence Award

The Blair County Chamber's 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award for Business Excellence will be presented to Joe Keller at the Business Excellence Dinner, set for October 17th at Blair County Convention Center. Keller will be the 20th recipient of the annual award.

"We had a number of outstanding candidates for the award," acknowledged Richard Fiore, Jr., chair of the Chamber Board. "It's always difficult to choose just one nominee but it is never difficult to choose someone like Joe Keller. His reputation as a business leader and a community steward is well-known."

Keller, 67, started his business - Keller Engineers - in 1991. The firm currently has nearly 80 employees at four offices: Hollidaysburg, State College, Gettysburg and Camden, New Jersey.

The Lifetime Achievement Award was created to pay tribute to people in the Blair County business community who have displayed exceptional leadership qualities and business success over an extended period of time. The first recipient of the award was the late Ernie Wissinger in 2001. Mark Barnhart of NPC is the most recent.

"The award, from the very beginning, was the single



Joe Keller

focus of the dinner," Fiore pointed out. "Prior to that there was nothing recognizing excellence from the business perspective and nothing recognizing lifetime achievement. This award recognizes both."

The Executive Committee of the Chamber Board reviews the nominations and makes the selection. Nominations are received from inside and outside the Chamber.

To make reservations for the Business Excellence Dinner and the reception, contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or visit the Chamber Website at www.blairchamber.com. Sponsorship opportunities are available by emailing jcovert@blairchamber.com.

Burchfield Organization keeps its focus on what it does best



Dave (left) and Richard Burchfield have helped to carry-on the business started by their father and mother in 1982.

By any stretch of the imagination, 1982 was not the ideal time to start a business. Interest rates were nearly 20% and much of the business community was in survival mode.

"The economy was at a very difficult point back then," remembers David Burchfield, Jr., who was sixteen at the time. "My parents (David, Sr. and Linda) ignored the challenges and through hard work, determination and the Grace of God decided to give it a shot. Needless to say, it's worked out."

The Burchfield Organization is a diverse company consisting of many facets of the automotive industry. Those can be categorized into four areas: Sales, towing, repairs and rentals. The company started as a small, used truck sales lot, repair facility and salvage yard.

Today, the full-service repair facility consists of 15 bays and 3 garages. The towing service is 24-hour, local and long distance, light, medium and heavy duty. It has a fleet of more than 20 trucks.

"We specialize in used trucks such as pick-ups, box trucks, dump trucks, bucket trucks, service trucks, garbage trucks and many more," Burchfield, Jr., who became president earlier this year following his father's death, explained. "We also offer rentals through our Budget truck rental office. Trucks are rented for one day or up to 30 days. They come in various sizes and may be driven one way or used for round trips."

As a family-owned business, the Burchfield Organization has been able to maintain a steady workforce.

"My mother, my brother

Richard and my nephew Richard, Jr. make up our management team," Burchfield pointed out. "We have been blessed to retain a majority of our honest and dedicated employees. Many of those employees (there are 20 fulltime and 12 part-time) have been with us for more than 15 years."

As the company continues to grow, he's confident that he'll be able to hire people with similar work ethics.

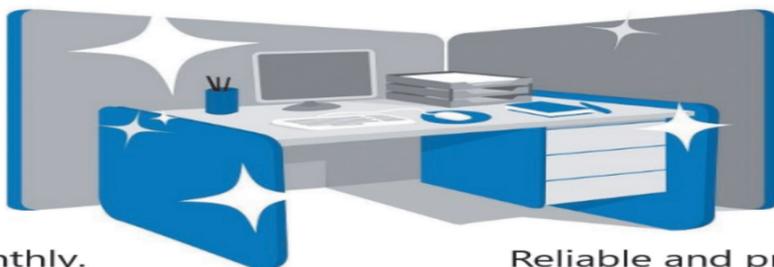
"We're looking for the people who get up early in the morning and can't wait to get to work," he acknowledged. "We've got people like that now and it has helped our business in many ways. It was my dad's drive and tenacity that set that standard and we've been able to follow it."

(Burchfield Organization has been a Blair County Chamber member since 1989.)

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