

Passing the torch no big deal at Amtran

Succession planning is often considered more of an art than a science. Which is why, unless it's done well, it can have long-lasting effects.

Eric Wolf didn't have to be reminded of that when he made the decision to retire as general manager of Amtran at the end of this year. Wolf has been at Amtran for the past 28-years, the first three as Director of Planning and Marketing. He will turn 65 in November.

While planning has been a strong suit for Wolf as he developed his own management style, good fortune has smiled on him as well, particularly when it came to recommending his successor. The training period, he admits, has been long and thorough.

"When I first interviewed Josh eight years ago, he was working at a transit agency in a different county," Wolf remembers. "We talked for more than an hour and afterward I told my wife Kate that it was as if someone

gave him the perfect answers for anything I asked him. I thought, he can't possibly be that good. I was wrong. After eight years, I can unequivocally say that he really is that good."

The "Josh" is Josh Baker who started in 2014 as Director of Staff & Customer Services (which changed to Deputy CEO in 2019). He is the heir apparent who has been preparing for his new role through trial, error and a comfortably long leash.

"Eric has been an ideal manager and mentor," Baker acknowledged. "I came to Amtran as part of our succession planning efforts with the possibility of following Eric when he decided to retire. During that time, Eric has been excellent at providing direction and feedback, all while allowing me the freedom and independence to explore ideas and solutions to challenges on my own and at my own pace."

That learning curve has been effective, according to Wolf.

"From the beginning, Josh has completely embraced the work culture at Amtran and focused on moving it forward," he pointed out. "He frames everything in terms of living our values and advancing our strategic plan. He is very good at communicating those things to everyone at Amtran."

Having the right people onboard makes that difference, Baker believes. He credits Wolf with creating the environment where that can take place.

"Eric believes in working diligently to hire the right people and then providing them with the resources and support for them to assist Amtran in achieving our goals," he noted. "He is supportive and inquisitive, while not micro-managing. He's the true definition of a servant leader."

So after December, how often will Josh Baker likely see Eric Wolf?"

"Seldom," Wolf emphasizes. "I don't plan to be a helicopter retiree. Josh



Eric Wolf (right) and Josh Baker have made a formidable team at Amtran for the past eight years. Wolf will retire in December. Baker will step-up.

knows that I'm just a phone call away but I don't think I'll hear from him often. He knows what he's doing."

Baker is confident but also somewhat nostalgic.

"Eric's retirement, along with multiple other key per-

sonnel that we've lost in the past year-and-a-half voids Amtran of decades of institutional knowledge that we can't easily replace," he stated. "We've lost a lot of great people and will lose a great leader that we'll miss

immensely. They all know that they're always welcome here at Amtran and I'm quite certain that we'll see them from time to time."

(Amtran has been a Blair County Chamber member since 1977.)

Chamber committee promoting beauty

There is little doubt that near the top of Blair County's appeal as both a place to live and a place to visit is the beauty of the great outdoors. The Blair County Chamber realizes it and has featured a separate committee dealing with sustainability. The Altoona Curve also realizes it and allocates every Thursday night to heighten its awareness by changing the name of the home team to "Altoona Mountain City."

"What's better than saving our mountains and keeping everything pristine?" asks Mike Kessling, the Curve's Director of Marketing, Promotions and Special Events. "This idea came from within our front office staff and has proven to be very popular."

The Curve punctuated the promotion by partnering with the Blair County Conservation District. The District sets-up four or five tables each Thursday on the concourse at PNC Field and invites organizations associated with nature and conservation to display useful information for Curve fans.

"It's really been impressive what people display and how interested game attendees seem to be to learn



Mike Kessling of the Altoona Curve (center) lays-out the game plan for an upcoming event with Chelsey Weyant and Matt Michrina.

about the importance of maintaining our environment," explained Chelsey Weyant, Stormwater Coordinator at the Conservation District. Weyant is also a member of the Chamber's Sustainable Blair County Committee. The committee will have a display table at the Curve game on September 15th.

"We're looking forward to

providing some information on what we do and how people can get involved," acknowledged Matt Michrina, Planogram Analyst at Sheetz and Vice-Chair of the committee. "We'll be featuring a number of ways that businesses can benefit from being more sustainable including some survey opportunities that help employers to assess the strengths and

weaknesses of their sustainability efforts."

There will also be a raffle that people can take part in with a rain barrel being the grand prize.

"Our committee has gained considerable support with a few of our projects and we're hoping to expand that support as people get to know us," Michrina pointed out. "It's a great cause."

FBI Agent to address Breakfast Club

Cyber security is a topic that makes businesses cringe, even if those businesses have made a legitimate effort to prepare. As the saying goes, "It's not a matter of if you'll be attacked but when."

At the next Chamber

"Breakfast Club," set for September 8th beginning at 7:45 a.m. at The Casino at Lakemont Park, Mackenzie Monarko, a special agent with the FBI will present: "Cyber Agility Framework: Becoming a Housefly in a Venus Flytrap World."

The cost to attend Breakfast Club is \$20 for Chamber members and \$30 for non-members. To register, contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com. Corporate sponsor of the Breakfast Club is UDNI.



Agent Mackenzie Monarko

SETTING THE PACE

Marlee Ritchey The Chamber Foundation Board of Directors

1. Title and place of work: HR Manager at Central States Manufacturing, Inc.

2. Years with current position: I have worked in HR at Central States for over 3 years. I started as the HR Generalist then moved into a HR Business Partner role and then recently got promoted to HR Manager for the East Division.

3. Positions held in the Chamber: Board Member for the Chamber Foundation.

4. Family: Happily married to my husband, Travis Ritchey. We will celebrate our one-year anniversary in September.

5. Community organizations: At Central States we have a giving back program and partner with several local community organizations. To name a couple that I have helped lead projects for is the Bulldog Backpack Program and Make-A-Wish foundation. Outside of work I am an active member at Woodbury Church of the Brethren.

6. Hobbies/leisure: I enjoy spending time outside and exploring the various trails we have in our area. I also enjoy baking and specialize in cupcakes! Most importantly I enjoy spending time with my family and serving in ministry.

7. Education: Graduated from Chestnut Ridge High School. I have a dual bachelor's degree in Human Resource and General Management from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I also obtained my SHRM-CP Certification.

8. First job: Industrial Recruiter at Aerotek serving companies in Bedford and Blair County.

9. I would like to be known for: My greatest



joy in life is my relationship with Jesus. It is my hope that my life would be a testimony to bring God glory. I hope to be a light and a blessing to everyone I encounter.

10. Business role model: My role model is my father, Mark Clevenger. He served as a teacher for over 30 years, Athletic Director, and later in his career in Administration at Chestnut Ridge School District. My father is the most honorable person I know. He is respectful, organized, and communicates with tact. I am grateful for the hard-working principles he instilled in me and credit much of who I am today to his guidance in my life.

11. Your thoughts about the Chamber: The Chamber is an outstanding community of individuals and businesses that are all passionate about where we live and work. I have enjoyed the opportunity to grow professionally with the educational and networking opportunities the Chamber provides.

12. Your thoughts about Blair County: Blair County is a wonderful place to work and serve. I have been grateful for the opportunity to network with extraordinary people in Blair County.

NOW HIRING

Chief Financial
Officer

Blair County Chamber of Commerce

Full-time position with benefits. Oversees all financial aspects of the organization and plays a strategic leadership role in assuring that the organization remains financially strong. Also serves as Secretary/Treasurer of the Blair County Chamber Foundation. Effective team leader. Strong background and experience in managing finance and accounting functions. Send resume and cover letter, including salary and benefit expectations to jhurd@blairchamber.com. EOE

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