

Leadership Blair County introduces 29th class

Is it actually possible that the Chamber's Leadership Blair County Adult program is nearly three decades old?

"It's certainly impressive," acknowledged Maureen Dodson, who has facilitated the program for the past fourteen years. "The enthusiasm for LBC never diminishes. Many of the same businesses support it each year and others step forward based mostly on the recommendations of others. Servant leadership remains a popular concept."

This year's class consists of twenty members. Although the class met for the first time on September 9th, Dodson already sees some indicators that point toward an exciting ten months.

"There's already a lot of synergy," she pointed out. "They've started to coalesce. They seem engaged and creative and show good self-awareness. Those qualities are often the basis for a rewarding experience."

Traditionally, the reason that most LBC class members indicate their interest in applying for the program



The 2023 Class of the Chamber's Leadership Blair County program is comprised of twenty aspiring servant leaders.

is the recommendation of past graduates.

"I was aware of others who have gone through it and they couldn't say enough good things," remarked Jeff Fellingner of Sheetz. "Leadership Blair County has been on my work 'bucket list' for quite a while."

Jennifer Addison of Ward Transport and Logistics had

similar encouragement.

"I've read about (LBC) and wanted to apply when Dwain Key, who was in last year's class, contacted me and asked if I had an interest," Addison said. "It's so outside my comfort zone in a good way and will help me to get more involved in the Chamber and the community."

The youngest person in

this year's class is Sara Heron of Curry Supply, who is 22.

"I've known about the program for quite awhile and have always heard about the really great value that comes from the overall experience," she noted. "I like the broad age range and have already felt comfortable interacting with the people in the class."

LBC Class of 2023

Jennifer Addison
Ward Transport & Logistics Corp.

Aleisha Albertson
Blair Drug and Alcohol Program, Inc.

Carter Chatwood
CLI Transport LP/Sheetz

James Crowder III
First Energy Corporation/Penelec

Dakota Davis
NPC, Inc.

Dawn Drexler
ARC Federal Credit Union

Marcus Edwards
Altoona Blair County Development Corp.

Wes Elder
Young, Oakes, Brown & Co.

Jeff Fellingner
Sheetz, Inc.

Tammie Fleck
P. Joseph Lehman Consulting Engineers

Billie Jo Friday - Brooks
Billie J. Friday Agency LLC

Sara Herron
Curry Supply Company

Holly Keller
Garvey Manor

Colton Kensinger
Reliance Bank

Kevin Laird
Burke & Company, LLC

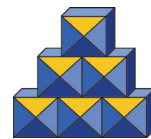
Katie Lipko
Keller Engineers

Samantha Longenecker
Stuckey Automotive

Destinee Pfirsching
Doing Better Business, Inc.

Tabor Schilling
Saint Francis University

Briana Shriver
Blair Image Elements/
Blair Companies



Public Service Academy off-and-running

The first of two sessions aimed at making Blair County citizens aware of the opportunities to run for elected office or be appointed to boards, commissions and authorities was called a success by its organizers.

The Public Service Academy, created by the Blair County Chamber's Public Policy Committee, met for nearly three hours last Tuesday at the Devorris Center for Business Development. In all, eighteen people gained insight, shared ideas and set the stage for a follow-up session on September 27th.

"We were well-pleased with the interest and enthusiasm that people brought to the event," acknowledged former Blair County Commissioner Donna Gority, who co-chaired the Academy along with former State Senator John Eichelberger. "Our intention from the beginning has been to heighten awareness of the political process locally and encourage people to become part of that process. Clearly, there is interest."

Eichelberger agreed. "While our numbers might have been a little short of what we hoped for, the comments and questions from attendees indicated that



Steve McKnight (left), President/CEO of ABCD Corporation answers a question during the recent Public Service Academy session.

there's a number of people committed to getting involved for the right reasons," he pointed out. "As the perception of what it means to be an effective elected official improves, there's little doubt that others will follow. We're playing a long game."

The first session of the Academy included a presentation by Steve McKnight of Altoona-Blair County Development Corporation on the importance of economic development to the future of the region and why elected

officials need to be attuned to the opportunities to move the region forward.

Gority spoke on why people should consider running for office, Joe Hurd of the Chamber talked about the challenges associated with becoming a candidate for school board, and Sarah Seymour, Blair County's Director of Elections and Voter Registration explained the mechanics of getting started.

"I thought everyone did a great job. The whole thing was very informative," admitted Claudia Montero, one

of the attendees. "The process can be very complicated if you try to navigate it on your own. I've always been curious to learn what's involved."

Devin Saylor, a videographer in his 20's, attended for a specific purpose.

"It's important that the younger generation gets more involved in the political process," Saylor disclosed. "Too often we complain about the way things are done without spending time or effort to change them."

St. Francis hosting Before Hours event at Curry Innovation



Tabor Schilling, Event and Facility Site Manager for Saint Francis University at Curry Innovation Center, looks forward to showing-off her new complex at the upcoming Business Before Hours.

Since its inception, the Blair County Chamber's "Business Before Hours" has been an outstanding way for businesses to showcase their operations while also creating an effective networking opportunity.

Those incentives were the reason that Saint Francis University is hosting the next Before Hours on September 28th from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. at the Curry Innovation Center in Downtown Altoona.

"We'll provide a tour of the facility and information on strategic business and educational collaborations that will impact everything from workforce readiness and STEM literacy to improving advanced manufacturing processes for regional businesses," explained Tabor Schilling, Event and Facility Site Manager for Saint Francis at Curry Innovation Center.

"It's also a great opportunity to grab a cup of coffee and consider how your business might take advantage

of rental space where visitors could consider possible collaborations."

Saint Francis's recent presence in Downtown Altoona is intentionally designed to bring together entrepreneurial, progressive leaders who thrive on the ability to think limitlessly and identify solutions that ultimately deliver real-world, real-time outcomes.

"Ultimately, we hope more people will take advantage of our growing offerings that span from traditional undergraduate enrollment to online education and workforce development," Schilling pointed out.

If you plan to attend Business Before Hours, you can park on 11th Avenue or in the parking lot behind the facility. There is no cost for Chamber members to attend the event. Non-members can attend for \$10. Registration is required. To register, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com.

It's Happening at the Blair County Chamber

- The Chamber's Executive Roundtable will hear a presentation by Brad Burger of Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies concerning its efforts to implement more inclusion and diversity into the regional workforce. The Roundtable has a strong interest in exploring ways to create greater workforce recruitment strategies.

- The Committee of Non-Profit Businesses of the Blair County Chamber will hold a Best Practices Forum this Thursday, September 22nd from 8:15 to 9:45 a.m. The Forum, entitled, "It's Not Worth the Gamble!" will be presented by Michael Mirabella, Liquor Enforcement Officer for the Pennsylvania State Police.

- Altoona Community Theatre, located at 1213 12th Street in Altoona will host the next Chamber "Business After Hours" on September 22nd from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The cost for Chamber members is \$10. Non-members may attend for \$20. To register, call (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com.

- The Orientation for the 2023 class of the Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) will be held on Sunday, September 26th at 6:00 p.m. at the Sheetz Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence in Altoona. This will be the seventh YEA! class. For further information on YEA! contact Joe Hurd at (814) 943-8151.

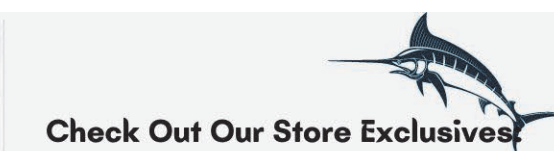


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