

HURD IMMUNITY

Restoring lost decency

The 2022 Mid-term Elections are just eight days away. Beyond the consequences of who wins and who loses, there would seem to be a collective sigh of relief just to have it behind us.

I'm not the oldest guy in Blair County but I have witnessed enough elections to

have formed a solid opinion about this one. I can't remember a political climate as blatantly nasty as the one we've been experiencing during the past six months, particularly in the races for governor and U.S. Senate.

Amid the barrage of dirty tricks and character assassinations, the Chamber's Public Policy Committee held a Public Service Academy program to, of all things, encourage people to run for elected office. On the surface, that may not seem like a reasonable piece of advice. Yet the committee was convinced that the best way to make the political process more humane was to educate potential candidates on the importance of embracing attributes that were once standard fare for anyone seeking office.

Fourteen aspiring candidates signed-up to attend the program. They each paid twenty-five dollars for six hours of insight and instruction, spread over two nights. Of course, they also got pizza. Both nights. The Chamber understands ways to motivate but doesn't always show great imagination.

If there were any specific expectations during the planning process for the program, it likely had to do with participation. We predicted that we'd have at least thirty. That prediction was more hopeful than scientific. A few days before the first program, our numbers sat uncomfortably at five. We thought about postponing. After one final blast on social media, a few additional people signed-on. Then a few more. Fourteen sounded darn good.

The decision to move ahead proved to be the right one. The program was well-organized and interactive. For that, the credit needs to go to the Academy's co-chairs – Donna Gority and John Eichelberger – who provided information and direction, most of it based on first-hand experience. A Democrat and a Republican working together for the benefit of the community without a hidden agenda? Imagine that!

The plan is to offer a similar program on a biennial basis as a prelude to elections that would involve municipalities and school districts. In the meantime, the Public Policy Committee will continue to look for additional ways to identify and recruit people who put the best interests of our community first.

To Paula Lamb, marketing and advertising are not just for the big guys. At her business – LAMB Solutions Advertising Agency in Altoona – Paula prioritizes the needs of a business instead of focusing on its size. A native of Carrolltown, Paula is a graduate of Juniata College with degrees in both Psychology and Criminal Justice. She and her husband Chuck have two sons, Preston and Carter.

The Chamber: Advertising is a tough business. What drew you to it as a career choice?
Paula: Well I always wanted to be a guidance counselor and help kids but since I decided not to get my masters and start a family I got into sales for some extra money and fell in love with it. I never would have thought I would like sales as much as I did but when I realized I could make a nice living and have flexibility in my schedule to take care of my family it was on like Donkey Kong. I took the saying "the skies the limit" and I reached and reached and reached and then one day I realized the way to reach higher was to take my career in sales to the next level and open an Advertising Agency. Who knew I would get to be a "guidance

Chamber Q&A

counselor" if you will in the sales and advertising world. I wanted to help clients with all avenues of advertising and offer them a one stop shop. I enjoyed working in television and digital sales but I always felt like just working with a piece of the advertising pie wasn't enough, I wanted to help more and I wanted to work with the whole advertising pie. When you look at all the different forms of advertising available it can be overwhelming and most business owners don't have the time or even know where to start.

The Chamber: What would people in Blair County be surprised to know about Paula Lamb?
Paula: I am not from Blair County but I get to see all 4 seasons of our Central PA beauty while I travel up and down the mountain through about 3 different weather patterns both ways a day. I love to travel, play scrabble, an accessory nut and haven't met a snowman that didn't make my heart melt.
The Chamber: What misconceptions are there about



Paula Lamb's goal of becoming a guidance counselor took a different path once she was exposed to sales and marketing.

the need to advertise, particularly among small business owners?
Paula: There is no business too small that I cannot help. All depends on what you need for your business. Advertising and marketing is customized for each client. We will make a plan that fits your needs and budget. If you are not sure of your needs or a budget then you should definitely give me a call for a free consultation to evaluate how advertising could help your business.

The Chamber: Who are your personal and professional role models and what makes them special?
Paula: Personally and professionally I have never just looked up to one person. I have always looked up to everyone that has never looked down on me personally or professionally. They say we live in a "tough big bad world." I say we have a choice to live in a "big bright beautiful world." Times may be tough and bad things can happen but if we

all remember to be positive role models to all we interact with the world will always be a brighter place to live.
The Chamber: What's still on Paula Lamb's "bucket list?"
Paula: There are so many things and every time I check one thing off my bucket list I add one to it because I feel we all need to strive to live life to the fullest. A few that are top of my list are to buy a place on the beach in OBX, Florida and or Aruba! Meet Vin Diesel and Julia Roberts!

Symposium results creating clearer WE-LEaD strategies



Marcia Cumming of MarCia's Chocolates (left) and Lindsey Riley of Reliance Bank discuss challenges at the recent WE-LEaD Symposium.

Despite repeated efforts to level the playing field, business women have always seemed to face greater challenges than their male counterparts. Beyond acceptance, women have struggled to gain equal footing in a number of industry sectors that are among the most highly compensated. To get a clearer sense of the issues and build a strategy around them, the Blair County Chamber's WE-LEaD Committee hosted a symposium on October 12th. WE-LEaD is Women Encouraging Leadership Education and Development. Fifteen business women shared thoughts on ways to better support one another, create opportunities for advancement in careers in which they are under-represented and help young women to access information on leadership and mentorship.

"What we heard from the various focus groups at the symposium are concerns that we've heard in the past," acknowledged Sara Fiore-Gunnert, who chairs the committee. "Clearly, progress has been made in certain areas. But there are still many instances where women show reluctance to be assertive and it slows the process." Where younger women are concerned, it's likely to require an effort to build stronger relationships with local schools according to committee member Amanda Johnston.

"The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) emphasis is one that still hasn't gained enough momentum for young women to benefit," she pointed out. "We need to work with guidance counselors to get the word out." One other area that WE-LEaD is hoping to address but which provides a significant challenge is the current childcare crisis. "The childcare issues are really big," admitted committee member Becky Stevens. "We're hoping to make inroads on that wherever we can. It shouldn't just be the case of women staying home and men going to work. The strategy needs to go much deeper than that."

Sandals St. Lucian, Peru added to list of Chamber trips



Sandals Grande St. Lucian, located on Rodney Bay, is known to have the calmest waters in Saint Lucia.

The Blair County Chamber's list of upcoming travel opportunities continues to grow. With 48 Chamber travelers scheduled to return on Wednesday from Iceland, there is little doubt that people are committed to once again visiting destinations throughout the world now that Covid-19 is no longer a factor. And the Chamber is eager to help get them there. "We seldom need to ask people where they want to go," acknowledged Chamber President Joe Hurd. "They contact us and let us know their preferences. We try to accommodate." With New Zealand/Australia (January) and Egypt (March) already on the calendar for 2023, the Chamber has recently added Sandals Grande St. Lucian

for next October. The informational meeting for that trip, done in partnership with Ketrow KURTZ Travel, will be on November 16th at 6:00 p.m. at the Devorris Center for Business Development. There is no cost or obligation to attend but interested people are asked to contact Marilyn at the Chamber at (814) 943-8151. The first Chamber trip for 2024 will be to Peru in April. It includes Machu Picchu and Lake Titicaca. That trip will be in partnership with Epic Journeys. "We are already in discussions with our member travel agencies for two additional trips for 2024," Hurd disclosed. "There are so many places that we haven't been in addition to places we look forward to returning to."



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