

Career Shadowing helps future workforce

Career Shadowing Week (November 14-18) was once again an outstanding success.

“With all its moving parts, it really had very few disruptions,” acknowledged Judy Rossi, who has been the event coordinator since the Blair County Chamber introduced it through its BASICS program in 2009. “The school contacts, the volunteers and the participating businesses did an incredible job making sure that students were where they needed to be.”

Rossi and co-coordinator Leanne Sidney took the lead in assuring that the recruitment of businesses and students went smoothly. That process has evolved from pencil and paper into elaborate technology that speeds things up but also contains a considerably higher degree of peril.

“It’s taken considerable time to get us to where we’ve needed to go,” Rossi pointed out. “When everything falls into place, it’s a beautiful thing. When it doesn’t it can become more than a little frustrating. PS Solutions has been really good to work with and has helped to keep everything on-track.”

This year’s Career Shadowing Week involved 330 students and 134 employers. Those numbers are impressive but fall short of the more than 400 that took part in the years just prior to Covid.

“Covid set Career Shadowing back,” Rossi admitted. “We even had a year that we didn’t offer it. The schools wouldn’t let the students out and the businesses wouldn’t let them in. It was far from the ideal situation.”

The BASICS (Businesses And Schools Investing in Cooperative Solutions) model has high school sophomores participating in a Career Fair at the Blair County Convention Center and then making Career Shadowing opportunities available to them as juniors. The shadowing experience is generally a half-day and focuses more on the day-to-day responsibilities of working at a business.

“A lot of the students who come here to shadow have a level of confidence that they know what to expect,” explained Lisa McElheny, Practice Administrator at Allegheny Pain Management in Altoona. “Many of them are surprised – and inspired – to find out what we really do and how involved it is. We get great kids who are incredibly engaged and ask great questions. They enjoy the experience and so do we.”

Allegheny Pain Management has welcomed multiple students at its facility for at least the past ten years. This year, twelve students shadowed there.

“There’s such a great need for healthcare professionals in our region that we’re happy to do what we can to help local students see the

benefits of launching a career close to home,” McElheny stated.

Dr. Dennis Hallinan echoes those sentiments. He, too, has taken an active role in Career Shadowing Week for the past several years.

“I recognize the benefit from first-hand experience,” he noted. “I shadowed back-in-the-day and the experience gave me the impetus to become an optometrist.” First-hand experience worked for Josh Bueno too, a Hollidaysburg junior who shadowed Hallinan.

“In eighth grade, I sustained a serious eye injury that exposed me to a number of different procedures,” Bueno said. “Among other things, it made me interested in this type of career. Shadowing answered a lot of questions.”

Betsy Garach, a Sales and Design Specialist at TBT Commercial Interiors in Altoona, has hosted shadowing students for at least the past seven years. It’s likely that her involvement will continue.

“For us, it’s a way to help the kids who have an interest in what we do,” she explained. “We do designing all the way through the finished product. We encourage students to come back after they graduate. Career Shadowing is clearly a win-win for students and the businesses who host them. It’s something that all businesses should consider doing.”



At top: Dr. Dennis Hallinan (right) talks optometry with Hollidaysburg junior Josh Bueno during Career Shadowing Week. Dr. Hallinan has been involved with helping local students for several years.

Andy Kordish (left) of Stiffler McGraw helps student Evan Hollenback learn about the many aspects of architecture.

Chamber Board appoints new officers; Stapelfeld to become next Board Chair

The new slate of officers is in place for the 2023 Blair County Chamber Board of Directors.

Heading the organization as Board Chair will be Clark Stapelfeld of New Pig Corporation who has served as Chair-Elect for the past two years. Richard Fiore, Jr. of Leonard S. Fiore, Inc. will complete a two-year term as Board Chair at the end of December. He will remain on the Executive Committee as Immediate Past Chair for one year.

Rounding out the slate of officers are Becky Crilly of Reliance Bank, who once again serves as Treasurer; Jamie Stumph of Advantage Resource Group who is Chair Elect; Donna Fisher of the Blair County Conservation District who is Vice-Chair of Communications/Advocacy; Kirsten Stratton of KMS Interior Design who is Vice-Chair of Promotions/Events; and Leslie Estep of Tyrone Area



Becky Crilly



Leslie Estep



Donna Fisher



Clark Stapelfeld



Kirsten Stratton



Jamie Stumph

School District who is Vice-Chair of Education.

“It’s really an impressive group of people from the business and education communities,” admitted Chamber President Joe Hurd. “All seven of the

officers have, at one time or another, chaired a Chamber committee. Four are graduates of our Leadership Blair County program. Clearly, the Chamber is in good hands for the foreseeable future.”

In December, the Chamber Board will add two “Board Chair Appointments” which will complete the 2023 Board. Those appointments will be featured in an upcoming Business Insight.

SETTING THE PACE

Nathan Karn Chamber Solicitor

1. Title and place of work: Managing Partner, Evey Black Attorneys LLC.

2. Years with current position: Associate Attorney, 12/2000-1/2006; Partner, 1/2006-present; Managing Partner, 1/2019-present.

3. Positions held in the Chamber: Pro Bono Solicitor.

4. Family: Wife, Laura; Daughter, Abigail, Junior at Cedarville University, Music Education Major; Son, Nathan, Jr., junior at HAHS; Son, Gideon, sophomore at HAHS.

5. Community organizations: Lead the Awana Club (children’s ministry) at Grace Bible Church with my wife.

6. Hobbies/leisure: Between spending time with my family and my leadership of the Awana Club, I do not have much extra time. I do enjoy traveling with my family whenever we are able.

7. Education: 1992 - Hollidaysburg Area High School; 1996 - Furman University, Greenville, SC; 1999 - University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

8. First job: Intermediate Unit 8 – Assistant to Director of the ATOMS program.

9. I would like to be known for: I would like to be known for, although understanding that I did not do it perfectly, that I lived according to the principles of my faith in Jesus.



10. Business role model: Mike Dorezas, former partner at Evey Black Attorneys. He was a great teacher and had tremendous patience. He also exemplified how to transition his business to the next generation.

11. Your thoughts about the Chamber: The Blair County Chamber is too often a hidden gem because it provides more than various services to businesses and nonprofits, but it also creates an atmosphere for employees of those entities to develop relationships that will help them indirectly enhance their business or in the case of nonprofits, how they achieve their purpose.

12. Your thoughts about Blair County: Blair County lies in a great location that is near enough to larger population centers to access things not available locally but far enough away to avoid the downside to those more urban areas. It has rich opportunities for recreation and is a wonderful place to raise your children.

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