



Sneaking through

No one hates technology quite like I do. It wasn't the result of any unusual phenomenon or being accosted by a crazed techno-geek. I wasn't dropped on my head as a small child. I just never developed an affinity for anything more sophisticated



Joe Hurd

than finding the ESPN website to keep tabs on my fantasy football team. And, of course, checking my email. While I don't have an overabundance of admiration for any particular aspect of technology, I do appreciate the effort of the genius who developed the spam filter. I will occasionally venture into my junk mail file just to see exactly what I've been missing. While some aspects of technology may not be accurately named, I assure you junk mail is not one of them. It has more than earned its stripes.

Recently, I've noticed that the spam filter has gotten a little lazy. A few renegade emails have been sneaking through. At least they appear to be renegades. I'll let you decide.

- The Clipperpro Omega Toenail Clipper promises to cut my toenails without pain. It contains medical-grade steel blades that rotate 180 degrees. It was designed by orthopedic surgeons. It actually looks like a staple gun. I'm predicting, with my diminishing dexterity, that there would still be potential for pain which, by the way, I wasn't having with my 99-cent toenail clipper.

- A company in South Dakota can give me an incredible deal on Playground equipment. "You're in luck," was how the email began. I'm not sure that I want to waste whatever remaining luck I might have on playground equipment. Did I mention that my luck didn't include free shipping?

- According to an email that I've actually received more than once, my reputation as a kick-boxing instructor has made me eligible for Iowa's highest award. I suppose never having been a kick-boxing instructor has kept me from tarnishing my reputation. Iowa's highest award, interestingly, has nothing to do with kick-boxing. As near as I can tell, last year's winner ran a crop-dusting business. If I've built a reputation for crop-dusting, I'm not aware of it.

- And finally, a company in New Jersey guarantees me that if I change my bedtime ritual they'll teach me how to "pee-out stubborn fat in the morning."

At the risk of repeating myself, no one hates technology quite like I do.

Cox brings passion to local church

Pastor Richard Cox is not a native of Blair County but has successfully built a reputation for helping local people to gain a better understanding of how to explore their faith and develop hope. The pastor of Overflow Church in Altoona, Richard has been active in the Chamber and is a 2013 graduate of Leadership Blair County. Richard and his wife Tonya have three children: Caleb (11), Allison (9) and Kristen (7).

The Chamber: How would you describe Overflow Church to someone unfamiliar with it?

Richard: Overflow Church was started to provide a place for those outside the church to explore faith and discover the hope we can have in Jesus. We chose the name Overflow because we believe God blesses the church so that we can be a blessing to those around us. From the beginning, Overflow has been committed to serving those outside our Church family.

The Chamber: At what point did you decide that you had a calling in the ministry and how would you hope that those in your congregation would describe you?

Chamber Q&A

Richard: I felt a call to ministry as a young boy. Growing up I thought I would be serving as a missionary in a Global context, but God had other plans. I started sensing God was calling my family and me to start a new church in 2010 while I was serving on the staff at the Hyde Wesleyan Church. Anyone who knows me knows I have a passion for helping people discover their God-created calling.

The Chamber: Overflow Church has been a Blair County Chamber member for the past ten years. Why has it been important for a church to be a member of a business organization?

Richard: Overflow has been a member of the Chamber from the very beginning. We believe the Chamber offers a lot of value to churches and non-profits who, just like the business community, want to see Blair County thrive. Personally, I have found a lot of value in attending chamber events both to learn and grow as a leader and to network with other



Pastor Richard Cox has placed a high priority in initiating programs that benefit those in the community.

leaders in our community. **The Chamber: You are a graduate of the Chamber's Leadership Blair County program. How has that program impacted your effectiveness as a pastor?** **Richard:** When I moved to Altoona to start Overflow Church, I asked people who the groups were that were making a difference in our community. Among the top answers I received was the Leadership Blair County Program. I was immedi-

ately drawn to LBC's vision to equip Blair County's leaders to live as servant leaders in our community. Participating in LBC was one of the best decisions I made. **The Chamber: Who are your personal and professional role models and what makes them special?** **Richard:** Mother Theresa. I love the example she provides us for loving Jesus and loving people well. Her faith in Jesus shaped

every aspect of her life. **The Chamber: What's still on Richard Cox's bucket list?** **Richard:** I love exploring and visiting new places. Over the last several years I've developed a love for our nation's national parks. This past summer my wife and I were able to visit Kenji Fords and Denali National Parks in Alaska. I would love to visit a new national park each year with my family.

YEA! graduate takes next step with Chamber membership



Mark Osmolinski (left) became the first graduate of the Chamber's YEA! program to become a Chamber member. He's pictured here with Richard Fiore, Jr.-Board Chair.

Mark Osmolinski is no stranger to the Blair County Chamber of Commerce.

As a sophomore at Altoona Area High School in 2018, Osmolinski completed the Chamber's Leadership Blair County Youth program. Two years later, he not only graduated from the Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!), his business was selected as the Most Outstanding by the Investor Panel.

Osmolinski hit the trifecta just a few weeks ago when his newest business, Mitrix Inc, became a Chamber member.

"The Chamber has played a significant role in what I'd hoped to accomplish from a very early age," he acknowledged. "Their programs touched

the important aspects of what my interests were and continue to be."

The Leadership Youth program gave Osmolinski "the opportunities with networking and connections that allowed me to make some giant steps forward." Those steps became even larger when he applied for YEA!

"It was amazing," he pointed out. "I never expected, especially with so many great business ideas from the others in the class, to be selected as the most outstanding." His business – Mark's Tech Solutions, LLC – was awarded \$3,000 by the investors to assist him in putting the final touches on what would ultimately become Mitrix.

"I started Mitrix in March to assist the local

community meet its cybersecurity needs," Osmolinski explained. "It's our intention to take action to mitigate the risks, especially for small business owners, that can compromise day-to-day IT operations."

His schedule is not for the faint-of-heart. As he fine-tunes Mitrix, Osmolinski also focuses attention on his own professional development.

"I've had the passion to attend Saint Francis University since I was very young," he admitted. "When I graduated from high school, I took two years off to work on my business. I'm now a freshman at Saint Francis which gives me an opportunity to branch-out onto different business paths. It's really very exciting."

Culp, Nelson set to begin service as board members



Rebecca Culp



Glenn Nelson

The 2023 Blair County Chamber Board of Directors is now complete.

New Board Chair Clark Stapelfeld has appointed Rebecca Culp of Berry Solutions Group and Glenn Nelson of Fort Roberdeau as the final two members of the Board. Stapelfeld had previously appointed Richard Fiore, Jr. whose term on the Board will expire later this month but who needs to serve an additional year as Immediate Past Chair. Culp and Nelson will

serve one-year terms. Board members Amy Mearkle and Neil Hollander will have also completed their terms in December.

"We're looking forward to welcoming Rebecca and Glenn to the Board," Stapelfeld pointed out. "They've been very active at the committee level and each has taken a leadership role."

The Chamber Board meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 a.m. at the Devorris Center.

Coming up...

Although it's still more than a month away, the Blair County Chamber's Annual Meeting and Awards Presentation is attracting a lot of interest. The nomination period for the seven awards that will be presented at that event will end this Friday.

"The Annual Meeting is the Chamber's premier way of starting a new year by recognizing the contributions and accomplishments

of the previous year," explained Board Chair Richard Fiore, Jr. "It's a celebration of a lot of significant things."

The Annual Meeting will be held on January 27th beginning at 7:30 a.m. at The Casino at Lakemont Park. Nomination forms for the awards can be found on the Chamber Website at www.blairchamber.com. To register to attend, use that same website.

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