

Absorbing the next punch

I know a lot of old people. I see them throughout our community. Apparently, when I wasn't paying attention, they all started to look quite a bit like me.



Joe Hurd

My mother shared similar symptoms of age oblivion. A few weeks before her death, she complained to me that "old people shouldn't be allowed to drive." She drove. She was 85.

Blair County's senior population is large and growing. Thanks to a number of agencies that provide activities and services, aging has a considerable upside. Even the challenges associated with housing that often baffle our municipalities don't seem to have quite the same impact on seniors.

Where potential problems are lurking for those in the upper age tier and ultimately for Blair County, fall within the realm of long term care. The county is blessed with some of the most outstanding nursing homes in Pennsylvania. I had the good fortune of working at two of them during my previous life – as HR/Marketing Director at Garvey Manor from 1986-94 and as Administrator of The Lutheran Home at Hollidaysburg from 1994-97.

Knowing what I know and seeing what I saw from the beginning of Covid-19 to now, I have little doubt that long term care has had to weather more adversity than any other industry sector. As many businesses are still climbing back on their feet, long term care is bracing for the next punch to the gut. And, courtesy of the federal government, that punch is on its way.

Two weeks ago, the feds proposed nationwide staff requirements for nursing homes. Those requirements exceed the current staffing levels that facilities in Pennsylvania are newly required to meet. To make matters worse, those levels will increase again next July.

In a perfect world, the staffing levels at nursing homes would guarantee that all residents would get personalized attention around-the-clock. The reality is that many of our area's facilities are experiencing a rather curious predicament. They have both long waiting lists and empty beds. A few have had to close entire sections of their homes because they can't hire enough workers to meet the mandated staffing requirements. So why raise those requirements?

One thing that I didn't miss after leaving long term care was the constant visits from those agencies that routinely inspect nursing homes. If our local homes are meeting the standards for resident care, and they are, why is it necessary to raise the bar?

Schwind leadership hits a high note

Janey Schwind, the Executive Director of Altoona Symphony Orchestra, is a true lover of music, both as a musician herself as well as a person with a passion for helping others to achieve personal goals. Janey, 34, is a graduate of Hollidaysburg Area High School. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education and a Master's in Clarinet Performance from Penn State. Janey and her husband Alex recently welcomed their newborn son George to the family.

The Chamber: What factors contributed to your decision to accept the Symphony's offer of becoming Executive Director?

Janey: Orchestra has always been a big part of my life and I've always wanted to work directly with an orchestra in some capacity, and the timing in my career after stepping aside from teaching was perfect!

The Chamber: What would people in Blair County be most surprised to know about the Altoona Symphony Orchestra?

Janey: Many might be unaware of our incredibly rich history and the fact that we have been around for 95 seasons, making us one of the oldest orchestras in

Chamber Q&A

Pennsylvania!

The Chamber: You were a band director at a local school prior to your role with the Altoona Symphony. What were some of the things that you learned from working with young people that help you in your current position?

Janey: Being a band director at Hollidaysburg Area Junior High School was a truly wonderful chapter of my life. I absolutely love working with young people. One of the greatest things that I learned from working with them was how each student has their own special gifts and talents unique to them and how important it is to communicate and nurture them in ways that make them feel seen and heard during a critical time of their life. The communication skills learned over my years of teaching have greatly impacted and helped me in my current position.

The Chamber: Compare and contrast Maestra Teresa Cheung and Maestro Nicholas Palmer?



Janey Schwind brings a wealth of musical talent and organizational skills to her role as Executive Director of Altoona Symphony Orchestra.

Janey: Both Maestra Teresa Cheung and Maestro Nick Palmer have a great love and appreciation for our community, and they differ in the variety of experiences they bring to their work.

The Chamber: Who are your personal and professional role models and what makes them special?

Janey: My professional role models have always been two incredible profes-

sors I've been fortunate enough to have had over the years: my college band director, Dennis Glocke and my clarinet professor of many years, Tony Costa. Not only are they masters of their crafts but they are incredibly kind and nurturing humans. My number one personal role model in life has forever been my mother, Chrissey Wagner. She has always shown to me that, despite whatever

life may throw at you, what matters most at the end of the day is your family.

The Chamber: What would you still like to accomplish in your music career?

Janey: I would like to continue to find new and exciting ways to share the beauty of live music (especially classical music) with others, of all ages, showing them that it really can be for everyone.

Stacy Hoover to be honored for service to ag community

The local business community, in particular the agricultural community, lost a significant advocate on May 8th with the unexpected passing of Blair County Chamber VP Stacy Hoover. On November 1st, that loss will be acknowledged and Hoover posthumously honored at the Chamber's Farm-City Dinner with the presentation by the Farm-City Committee of the 2023 Agricultural Community Excellence (ACE) Award.

"There was never any doubt on the committee's part who should receive this year's ACE award," disclosed Joe Diamond, who chairs the committee. "All that we've accomplished in our effort to promote the importance of ag in Blair County has been planned and executed through the hard work of Stacy Hoover. We miss her great organizational skills but most of all we miss her as a person. She was special."

October is Farm-City Month, an opportunity for

the committee to undertake a variety of events that raise awareness but also create enjoyment. The first of those events is this Wednesday when the annual "Visit to Industry" takes place. Hosting that event, which encourages people from the ag community to experience a non-ag business, will be at the new DelGrosso Sauce Plant at Pinecroft. Not surprisingly, that event has been sold out for several weeks.

"A lot of people jumped on that pretty quickly," Diamond pointed out.

A week after Visit to Industry (the 11th), the committee features its annual "Down on the Farm." An event for the entire family, Down on the Farm will be hosted this year by Piney Creek Greenhouse in Martinsburg. It runs from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., includes a meal catered by Holland Brothers and some great activities for young and old. The cost to attend is \$10/person and 10-and-under are free.

The grand finale of Farm



Stacy Hoover

City Month is the Farm City Dinner. A milk punch reception kicks it off at 6:00 and a Swiss steak meal follows at 6:30. Guest speakers at the dinner are Blair County Dairy Princess Ellie Dilling and Ann and Max Benzel, who will talk about how the pretzel business is impacted by agriculture. The cost to attend the dinner is \$20/person.

To register to attend Down on the Farm or the Farm-City Dinner, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com.

Renowned author chosen to headline WE-LEaD workshop



Beth Caldwell has built an impressive reputation as a speaker and an author.

The WE-LEaD Committee of the Blair County Chamber will host an interactive workshop on October 20th from 8:00 a.m. until noon at The Columns Banquet Center in Downtown Altoona.

The event will feature a presentation by inspirational speaker/author Beth Caldwell. That presentation, entitled "Overcoming Impostor Syndrome," focuses on what happens when girls and women believe what society has to say about them and how that can impact personal and professional growth.

Beth Caldwell is a licensed social worker turned personal trainer. A respected writer and columnist, she is the author of many books on leadership and personal development. She currently hosts the webTV program, The Morning

Mastermind, and has received numerous leadership awards throughout her career.

"We're extremely excited to welcome Beth to Blair County and hear her message," acknowledged Sara Fiore-Gunnnett, who chairs the WE-LEaD Committee. "Her topic is one that is extremely relevant to women of all ages. We're also hopeful that men will attend the workshop as well."

The cost to attend the workshop, which includes a full buffet breakfast and breakout sessions is \$55 for Chamber members and \$65 for non-members. All attendees will also receive a copy of Caldwell's book.

Corporate sponsor of the workshop is Benzel's Bretzel Bakery. To register, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com.



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