

Laurel Eye Clinic sees bright future for vision care

Building a solid reputation for quality and dependability, particularly in the medical field, is a monumental task that can take many years to perfect. Just ask the people at the Laurel Eye Clinic who have not only accomplished it but who are observing the 50th year of excellence during 2023.

The Laurel Eye Clinic was opened in 1973 by Dr. Steven Greenburg in Brookville, Pennsylvania. It began as one location and now there are eleven offices throughout the western and central parts of the Commonwealth, including one in Duncansville. Brookville and Duncansville have also been locations for the creation of two ambulatory surgery centers.

All told, Laurel Eye Clinic employs 120 people.

The Laurel Eye Clinic provides a wide range of eye care from routine eye exams, contact lens fits, refractive procedures including ICL's (Implantable Collamer Lens) along with cataract surgery with specialty intraocular lenses.

And it provides these for the entire family.

"We are one of the few facilities in all of Pennsylvania that offers the Light Adjustable Lenses to our cataract patients," acknowledges Darylynn Eger, Refractive Coordinator at the Duncansville location.

"The light adjustable lenses are the first and only IOL's that are adjustable after surgery giving us the ability to customize the visual outcomes for our patients for better results."

The Laurel Eye Clinic is also one of the few facilities that offers the refractive procedure EVO ICL in the immediate area. That procedure is reversible and can correct a wide range of vision, making it a great alternative to LASIK or PRK. It's just one of the many steps forward that has characterized the innovative growth of the company for five decades.

"We strive to stay at the forefront of technology to offer our patients the best possible care to achieve the best visual outcomes," Eger points out. "We introduced

corneal, retinal and ophthalmic surgery to Northwestern and Central Pennsylvania. Laurel Eye Clinic has performed many medical 'firsts' in the area."

As expected, there have been challenges.

"It comes as no surprise that the increasing cuts from insurance companies and the ever-growing costs of doing business provides significant challenges," Eger disclosed. "Throughout the years we have worked to adjust our pricing strategies to remain competitive while still bringing-in the funds needed to continue to bring the latest technological advances to our practice."

It's a balancing act for sure, according to Eger, but one that should serve the company well as it makes plans for the future.

"We will continue to provide comprehensive eye care to our patients by maintaining an uncompromising commitment to provide the highest level of patient care and service," she noted. "We will remain committed to advancing



Dr. Alex Corle, one of the optometrists at the Duncansville location of Laurel Eye Clinic examines a patient. Laurel Eye Clinic is marking 50 years in business.

our field and operate the practices in a highly efficient and respectful manner.

"We are constantly searching for additional doctors to join our team with the hopes of expand-

ing the practice and being able to care for more patients throughout the region."

The Laurel Eye Clinic has also maintained a strong reputation of working closely with local op-

tometrists, creating a strong continuum of vision services, essential for a successful community.

(The Laurel Eye Clinic has been a Blair County Chamber member since 1995.)

Joshua House to celebrate 25 years

Young people have no shortage of struggles when it comes to the ongoing challenges that life invariably will toss their way. Emerging unscathed seldom happens, even under the most desirable circumstances. Somebody needs to provide guidance. For the past 25-years, one of those somebodies has been Joshua House.

Commissioned on November 22, 1998, courtesy of a concerted effort in Tyrone consisting of pastors, ministers, community and business leaders, Joshua House was created as a non-profit organization to help area youth find purpose through athletics, education and faith.

That same November, Jim Kilmartin was licensed and ordained as a minister of the Gospel to move the mission forward. The first Joshua House building was dedicated the following May at 10 West 10th Street in Tyrone.

"This was the second floor of a storefront that hosted arcade games, ping pong, pool and foosball," Kilmartin remembered. "It had a kitchen for snacks and a Rec space for the kids to hang out. It was a safe space for kids in 6th-12th grade. The vast majority of kids that initially came were middle-schoolers. Once Joshua House expanded into the first floor of the storefront, the numbers increased and so did the diversity of ages."

In 2002, Joshua House purchased the former Citizens Fall Hall and after that, in 2015, bought and renovated the former National Guard Armory on Logan Avenue in Tyrone. Great things were happening. Then, thanks to Covid-19, they suddenly came to a screeching halt.

"Joshua House was significantly impacted due to ris-



The many accomplishments of Joshua House are the result of adhering to a mission. Helping further that mission are, left to right: Shannon Mielnik, Mark Mielnik, Jr. and Jim Kilmartin.

ing costs and the inability to remain open," Kilmartin acknowledged. "Our board made the decision to sell the Armory to Nate Verilla, a longtime volunteer who had come through Joshua House and who had a vision for moving it forward."

The sale also allowed Kilmartin to take the next step in his ministry and as a businessman. He moved to Altoona and started Center City Church and Pinnacle Professional Cleaning Services.

Joshua House continued to operate in Tyrone for a short time and has now re-

emerged under the leadership of Mark, Jr. and Shannon Mielnik, two former school teachers in the Scranton area who were in the process of opening a Joshua House type facility when Kilmartin encouraged them to return to their roots. The new Altoona location is at 1408 Eleventh Avenue. At least until a larger building becomes available.

"Our hearts are to continue to build on the 25-year legacy and the rich history of Joshua House," Mark Mielnik disclosed. "We will continue to reach the youth in a variety of important

ways. We want to create opportunities for youth to belong, believe in themselves and become all that God has created them to be."

A celebration of the 25 years of Joshua House will be held on December 8th at Heritage Discovery Center in Downtown Altoona. The night will include a dinner, a program and a whole lot of dancing. There will also be a silent auction. For more information, go to www.joshuahouse.com/gala2023.

(Joshua House has been a member of the Chamber since 2010.)

Non-profit businesses get to "strut-their stuff" at networking program



Cindy Harmon of Lexington Clubhouse (far right) was one of the non-profit exhibitors at the Business Before Hours.

There is little doubt that one of the least understood and often unappreciated business categories in Blair County is the non-profit community.

To help raise the profile of that sizeable group, the Blair County Chamber's Committee of Non-profit Businesses hosted a "Business Before Hours" event on October 26th from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. at the Devorris Center for Business Development.

Co-sponsors of the event were CONTACT Altoona and Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation. Numerous non-profits participated as exhibitors, providing information (and a generous supply of Halloween treats) to those who attended.

"It was a great opportunity, not only for non-profit businesses to network with one another but for those in the for-profit world and the public to see the wide variety of things that non-profits have to offer," explained Holly Keller of Garvey Manor Nursing Home, who chairs the committee. "Any

chance we have to show people who we are and what we do is valuable."

The Committee of Non-profit Businesses is one of the Chamber's largest. It's also one of the few that exists in the chamber world.

"We accomplish a lot," Keller pointed out. "We do educational programming, that helps non-profits to better understand many of the challenges that we face as well as ways to address those challenges. As we promote our programs and events, our numbers increase. But we can always use a few more."

The Business Before Hours has become a popular event for non-profits to host individually. "It's harder for us to host HD500 because our facilities are generally smaller and parking can be an issue," Keller noted. "Business Before Hours is a good fit."

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Committee of Non-profit Businesses should contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or email Joe Hurd at jhurd@blairchamber.com.

Make a pit stop at...

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