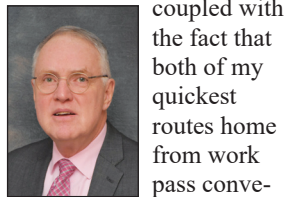


## HURD IMMUNITY

### Buddy can you spare a dime?

Anyone who knows me, even a little bit, knows that I spend an incredible amount of time in the grocery store. I'm not sure why that is but it probably has something to do with my love of food



**Joe Hurd**

Blair County Chamber of Commerce

This column is not about my penchant for voracious behavior. It's about the destination of my loose change after executing the often-baffling process of "self-checkout." The easy step-by-step instructions make it almost impossible for simpletons like me to venture too far afield. Scan the food, bag the food, pay for the food. It's not until the last step that any real thought is required.

Unless a shopper has managed to hit on an exact dollar amount, there is the option to round-up the grocery purchase to the nearest dollar. Sometime that may involve an outlay of an additional ten cents; sometimes it's more than that.

Either way, the ultimate choice is yes or no. That decision usually comes down to knowing what the spare change will be used for. Often it's the local Food Bank. Or the School Lunch Program. Or Make-a-Wish. No brainers for sure. But on rare occasions, there's one rather dubious option that pops up. That option is "Save the Planet."

As the aging process continues to wreak havoc on poor souls like me, certain doctrines like skepticism gain prominence. In simpler terms, I have nothing against the planet. My Sustainability Committee at the Chamber has assured me that it's worth saving. Now my grocery stores need to be a little less vague on how my 14 cents is going to get the job done.

Have I taken the initiative to get the information I'm looking for? Of course I have. Have I found the right person who is responsible for planet-saving? Not so far. But it's now becoming obvious that this "skepticism" thing works both ways. I notice that some of the people to which I've directed my question walk in other directions when they see me coming. Some walk very fast.

It's made me more determined to both unravel the mystery and learn just how many people are funding the cause. What do they know that I don't?

Stay tuned!

## 52nd Home Show slated for March 1-3

The 52nd Blair County Home Garden & Healthy Living Showcase will be held from March 1-3 at the Blair County Convention Center. Once again, the event will be a collaboration between the Blair County Chamber and the Blair-Bedford Builders Association. That partnership has been an unbeatable combination, according to Dave DeBiase, Executive Officer of the Builders.

"I feel that the Chamber and Builders have strived to educate and promote local businesses and products that are available to the home owner. We offer this venue in a first-class way that makes exhibitors proud to be part of the show," he pointed out. "Attendees appreciate the manner in which we promote the show. That combination has worked for a long time."

With little more than a

month until the show, The Home Show Committee has ramped-up the planning process and many businesses have already signed-on as exhibitors. The committee is anticipating a full complement of businesses in a wide variety of categories. Many of those businesses will have some connection to the healthcare industry.

"Since we added the Healthy Living component, we've gotten a little more participation from them each year," DeBiase acknowledged. "It made sense to include them."

While DeBiase has been associated with the show for many years, Jennifer Fleck is making her maiden voyage and in a very prominent role. The Chamber's new Event Coordinator, Fleck admittedly has a lot to learn and a tough act to follow. For the past two decades, it has been Stacy



Members of the Home Garden & Healthy Living Showcase Committee are, left to right (seated): Dave DeBiase, Jimmy Burchfield and Jim Brown. (standing): Eugene Horomanski and Jennifer Fleck.

Hoover who did the majority of planning and execution of the show. Hoover unexpectedly passed away last May.

"Stacy made this show a special occasion for vendors

and attendees," Fleck disclosed. "I'm fortunate to have a strong committee behind me and an extensive amount of documentation from past shows, thanks to Stacy's organizational abili-

ties. I'm sure that the 2024 show will be a great one."

Businesses interested in being exhibitors should contact Fleck at (814) 943-8151 or email her at [jfleck@blairchamber.com](mailto:jfleck@blairchamber.com).

## Young Entrepreneurs Class continues business growth



Jamie Stumph leads a discussion at a recent YEA! session. Stumph and Matt Stuckey have been instructors all seven years of the YEA! program.

The seventh class of the Blair County Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy has hit the 1/3 mark and is building momentum.

"The class is a third of the way through the program and the sixteen students are making great progress thanks to a number of really dynamic speakers from the business community and some outstanding field trips to see what others have done," explained YEA! Program Manager Tim Gildea.

"And really, the best is yet to come."

The next third will in-

clude the arrival of business mentors, poised to help students fine-tune their business ideas. Each business (there are fourteen in this class) will have a mentor and nearly all mentors have had previous YEA! experience.

"The mentors play an incredible role," Gildea pointed out. "Their input is not only valuable, it augments the business plan that each student writes that forms the basis of what they build."

The second third also includes a CEO Roundtable event which gives students access to a panel of CEO's



who have built their own businesses.

"This validates much of what the students have learned to that point," Gildea noted. "It also sets the stage for the Investor Panel Event that takes place later-on and helps the students to complete their businesses."

## Chamber African Safari Trip able to add extra October dates

One of the Blair County Chamber's most popular trips will allow additional travelers as the result of securing additional dates. The African Safari Trip, which quickly sold out its October 5-19, 2024 dates late last year will now also have an identical trip from October 1-15.

"These are small group discovery trips which are

each limited to 18 travelers," explained Cynthia Watters of Epic Journeys, which is partnering with the Chamber on this trip. "These are the trips of a lifetime as you find yourself out on the Serengeti with incredibly beautiful animals. And Kilimanjaro at sunrise is a sight you'll never forget."

The Chamber will hold

an informational meeting on the African Safari, which also includes Amboseli National Park, Nairobi and Lake Eyasi, on February 8th at 6:00 p.m. at the Devorris Center for Business Development. There is no cost or obligation to attend but it's requested that you call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 to let us know you're coming.



WE-LEaD COMMITTEE

## WE-LEaD Committee to host networking event at new location



The new building that houses Mama Randazzo's Catering will host the next WE-LEaD networking event.

The Blair County Chamber's WE-LEaD Committee will hold its first event of 2024 – a networking opportunity from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on January 31st at Dazzling Realty, LLC, located at 521 North 4th Avenue in Altoona. That building is the new home to Mama Randazzo's Catering and Behe Brothers Brewing.

The cost to attend this event is \$25 for Chamber members and \$35 for non-

members. To register, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or online at [www.blairchamber.com](http://www.blairchamber.com). The WE-LEaD Committee is currently working on additional programs for the coming months, many of those dedicated to professional development and community service.

WE-LEaD is an acronym for Women Encouraging: Leadership, Education and Development.

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