

A partnership with the Altoona Mirror and the Blair County Chamber of Commerce

Helping others fulfilling for Fromknecht

Joe Fromknecht has a soft spot in his heart for anyone struggling to overcome adversity. So it's fitting that his role as Clinic Director at Duncansville Comprehensive Treatment Center (formerly Discovery House) would be right up his alley. Joe previously worked for 20 years at Altoona Regional Health System. Recently widowed, Joe has three children and three grandchildren.

The Chamber: How would you describe Duncansville Comprehensive Treatment Center to someone unfamiliar with it?

Joe: Duncansville CTC is an opioid treatment facility specializing in methadone, suboxone, and Sublocade. We provide counseling to support the medication provided for treatment. We provide a friendly, welcoming atmosphere for people to seek refuge from the pitfalls of drug and opiate abuse.

The Chamber: What would people in Blair County be surprised to know about Duncansville CTC?

Joe: The medications are highly regulated and we are required to adhere to both state and federal regulations. Every attempt is made to prevent diversion into the community. I think the public would be surprised to know how far-reaching opiate addiction has extended into the community. There are many amazing people in recovery and they are supported by the staff at the facility.

The Chamber: What misconceptions are there for treatment centers like yours?

Joe: A long term misconception is that we are exchanging one drug for another. This is not true, the medication is prescribed and monitored by a physician. Patients are prescribed a stable dose to take away withdrawal symptoms and to help them function nor-

Chamber Q&A

mally. Our patients are not criminals and junkies, there are many high profile, working people.

The Chamber: At the end of the workday what has provided you the most satisfaction?

Joe: Knowing that we have helped someone get back to a normal way of life and off illicit drugs. We have been told by the patients that the program has given them their life back. One of my co-worker's favorite quotes is "Somebody has to do something and I take great satisfaction in knowing I am somebody."

The Chamber: Who are Joe Fromknecht's personal and business role models? What makes them special?

Joe: I have many personal role models, I tend to gravi-



Joe Fromknecht has placed a high priority on helping people get their life back as they transition from illegal drugs.

tate towards people who support where I am in life and help me to be the person I want/need to be. My business role model is a gentleman named William Higgins. I met him when I worked in Erie and we kept in touch over the years. He

taught me how to be a good manager and role model for my staff and kept reminding me to treat people as I wanted to be treated.

The Chamber: What is still on Joe Fromknecht's "bucket list?"

Joe: My bucket list is cur-

rently under revision. I have plans in February 2025 to go to Italy with my daughters, son-in-law and grandson to see my son who is stationed there in the Navy with his family. Once the updated list has been finalized I will let you know.

Encompass Health completing renovations with Open House



The Encompass renovation upgrades already impressive patient care. Ralph Donaldson (center) gets assistance from Matt Smith, physical therapist and Ashley Meyers, rehab tech.

One of Blair County's most reputable healthcare facilities is completing a major renovation and is inviting the local community to come and check it out.

Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Altoona, located at 2005 Valley View Blvd., will hold an open house on August 8th from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. The event will include tours of the newly-refreshed hospital and outpatient clinic, clinical demonstrations, finger foods and beverages.

"We're looking forward to showcasing all of the changes that have been made, both to people who have been here before and people checking us out for the first time," acknowledged Scott Filler, Encompass Health's CEO. Filler has more than 30 years of healthcare experience, 26 of that at Encompass and HealthSouth. Scheduling an open house will provide an opportunity to combine information and socialization.

"The hospital underwent a total refresh of our interior and exterior envelopes," Filler pointed out. "The project included renovations to all patient rooms and

restrooms, therapy gyms, offices, treatment spaces, nurses stations, swimming pool area, shower rooms, installation of oxygen and suctioning in all rooms, the installation of the Vector total body support system, new windows, new televisions, dialysis suite and common areas.

"We also did exterior renovations including milling, repaving and repainting the hospital's parking lots, ADA compliant sidewalks and entrance ways and a new security surveillance system. Really, it's difficult to determine what we didn't do."

Encompass and its predecessor - HealthSouth - have evolved in very strategic ways. The hospital opened in 1986 and is the only licensed acute rehabilitation hospital in Blair County. It opened as a 60-bed facility and expanded to 80 beds in 2011. It is the first acute patient rehabilitation hospital to hold Disease Specific Certification from the Joint Commission in Stroke, Brain Injury and Spinal Injury in the history of the United States.

"Later we added three additional disease-specific cer-

tifications in cardiac, hip fracture and advanced diabetes," Filler disclosed. "In addition to our hospital, we also have four outpatient clinics in Tyrone, Bedford, Duncansville and Altoona."

Filler is happy that the renovations concluded in such a positive way. He was impressed that, all-in-all, there were very few disruptions to care. The nine phases of the project took nearly two years to complete. Now, after taking a breath, it's time to move on to the next phase.

"With renovations completed, the hospital is focused on improving its clinic capabilities," he noted. "We've already implemented remote telemetry and will be starting inpatient dialysis around the first quarter of 2025 for its patients. We're also working toward being able to transfuse blood."

Anyone who would like to attend the open house should RSVP to (814) 941-3205. There's no cost to attend. (Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Altoona has been a member of the Blair County Chamber since 1985.)

Young Professionals building on momentum from recent wins



Rebecca Culp and Marcus Edwards form the leadership team of the Young Professionals of Blair County. That program is seeking greater participation in the coming months.

For more than a decade, the Young Professionals of Blair County has employed a variety of strategies to recruit new members and gain more involvement from area businesses. Success has been hard to come by.

That seems to be changing during 2024 as more YP events and programs seem to be attracting a greater number of participants. That's encouraging, believes Rebecca Culp of Berry Solutions Group, who chairs the YP Committee.

"Obviously, it's important to have a dedicated group of peers to interact with for individual growth and support," she pointed out. "We want to provide relevant opportunities within the community for young professionals to share ideas and help Blair County to benefit from their knowledge and enthusiasm. It's not always easy."

Marcus Edwards, the committee's vice-chair, agrees.

"Building a support system is essential," Edwards pointed out. "A lot of opportunities and challenges face business persons in

their 20's and 30's. Too often, they try to go it alone, not recognizing that making connections can be an effective way to move forward. As a program, the Young Professionals exists to help create those connections."

Lack of awareness often makes that more difficult, according to Culp.

"One of our committee's greatest challenges has been getting the word out on our events to the people who need to hear it," she noted. "It's not a marketing problem - the Chamber publicizes what we do in a variety of ways. I believe there's a misconception about the term 'professional.' Perhaps we may need to look more closely at how we're recruiting."

Edwards believes that other factors may also be complicating the situation.

"According to the American Psychological Association, 58% of 18 to 34-year-olds reported that their stress is completely overwhelming most days while 74% of people in that same age range say that it's harder to connect with people today than in the past," he disclosed. "If people do

have the time and energy, YP often competes with other hobbies and events that are trying to attract the same crowd."

The YP Committee is also cognizant of the need to create greater awareness by employers.

"There's a significant benefit to employers to have their young professionals involved in the type of activities that the Chamber offers through our committee," Culp acknowledges. "Providing chances for collaboration, continuous learning and community engagement is a good thing for employer and employee. At a time when employee retention can be difficult, an investment in a company's young professionals can be a really smart move."

(Employees of Blair County businesses between the ages of 21 and 39 are invited to be part of the Young Professionals of Blair County. There are opportunities to serve on the YP Committee or simply provide contact information so that marketing efforts can reach you. Call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 for more information.)

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