

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

Shildt honored with 2024 LBC Fellow Award

Melanie Shildt has been named the recipient of the 2024 Leadership Blair County Fellow Award. The announcement was made at the annual LBC Alumni Breakfast on Friday, September 27th at Liberty Hall at the US Hotel in Hollidaysburg. Shildt, a graduate of the class of 2017, has remained active with the program. "The Leadership Blair County Program had a significant impact on my life. I highly value the program and feel it is an important part of our community. The program relies on alumni volunteers to assist Chamber staff in planning and executing each session, so I wanted to remain involved to be able to give back to the program," says Shildt.

The selection process starts with nominations that

are submitted to former Fellow Award recipients who then review the nominees. The award goes to a person who continues to be involved with the LBC program as a servant leader. To be considered for the award the candidate must demonstrate contributions to the mission of Leadership Blair County, demonstrate servant leadership efforts for the stewardship of the Blair County Community, be a living example of the desired program outcomes, and in its truest sense the Leadership Blair County Fellow is an award for individuals who are convinced they do not deserve the honor. Fellow Award recipients selected Shildt based on her continued involvement with the LBC Adult Class sessions and the Adult Advisory Group. She is also an

active member of the LBC Alumni Advisory Group. They believe she knows the value of these programs for individuals to grow and to promote volunteer leadership in a community. "Before starting the LBC program, I knew servant leadership was important, but I don't think I realized just how critical it was to building a strong community. I learned so much about the true scope of need in our community, the variety of opportunities to give back, and just how much one person could truly make a difference," says Shildt. The Leadership Blair County Fellow Award is a surprise to the recipient. Shildt says she had no idea the award was going to her, "I was so humbled to receive this award. Though I definitely feel as though I



LBC Fellows Donna Gority, Sherri Stayer, Jodi Cessna, and Gary Drenning congratulate Melanie Shildt, (center), recipient of the 2024 LBC Fellow Award.

am not deserving, I am honored to have been recognized and am proud to join the other fellows as we con-

tinue to advance the mission of the Leadership Blair County Program. I'm not often speechless, but this

truly left me with no words. I am genuinely humbled by the nomination and even more so by the award."

Executive Roundtable meets to discuss strategic plan



Blair Alliance for Business and Economic Growth President/CEO Steve McKnight (left) shares insight with Roundtable members Philip Devorris and Phil Freeman.

More than three decades ago, the Blair County Chamber helped create a forum for the CEOs of Blair County's largest businesses. This month, members gathered to discuss the future strategic direction for the Chamber as a member of the Blair Alliance for Business and Economic Growth, along with key tourism development strategies and related projects. Members reviewed proposed changes to key

operations, staff assignments, and long-term goals for the Chamber and community overall.

The Executive Roundtable meets five times each year to discuss more effective ways to grow the local economy and invest in projects that have high success rates through collaboration and encourage regional initiatives.

The Executive Roundtable has been a Chamber program since 2007. Mem-

bership is limited to CEOs of Chamber-member businesses with at least 100 employees. Interested businesses fitting that criteria must apply through the Chamber to become Roundtable members.

Executive Roundtable breakfast meetings are at 7:30 a.m. at the Devorris Center for Business Development in Altoona. To join the Roundtable, please contact Jennifer Fleck at jfleck@blairchamber.com

We're Bouncing Around Blair

By Brittany Mayer

Most of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce's membership consists of small businesses. To market these businesses, the Chamber has created a new video product – "Bouncing Around Blair."

"Bouncing Around Blair was a great way to get information about the services we provide without it costing us any money," said Richard Servello, program director of the Children's Advocacy Center.

These one-minute videos are free to members and give an overview of their business. Chamber staff members Megan Rossman and Brittany Mayer visit businesses to film and produce a video to put on Chamber social media pages.

"It was a very seamless, well-organized process," said Emily Sollenberger, branch manager at Kish bank. "It was engaging for community members to view and led to questions about Kish Bank."

Many of the videos have over 1,000 views and are able to reach a new, large audience for these businesses.



Brittany Mayer, Megan Dively, and Laura Deely-Marshall of Blair Regional YMCA filming.

"Our video has almost 2000 views and gave us the opportunity to reach those who might not normally see us on social media which is excellent exposure for any business," said Laura Green from McCartney's Workplace Solutions. "We jumped at the opportunity to film a Bouncing Around Blair because it allowed us the ability to reach a broader audience."

When a Chamber member requests a "Bouncing Around Blair," they are given multiple options for filming, voiceovers and scripts. It is a completely customizable

experience.

"Bouncing around Blair allows us to connect with fellow Chamber members in a different way," said Green. "It offers first-hand insight into a business that you might not get from attending an HD500, committee event or other Chamber event."

If Chamber members are interested in scheduling a "Bouncing Around Blair" segment, email mrossman@blairchamber.com. To view previous "Bouncing Around Blair" videos, follow the Chamber on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

Networking event with WE-LEaD

The Chamber's WE-LEaD (Women Encouraging Leadership, Education and Development) committee is hosting a networking event Tuesday, November 12th from 5pm to 7pm. The goal is to help women connect to professionals in the business community while enjoying a fun night out. The group is known for networking activities that help people mingle. "Our icebreaker format breaks women up into groups and uses fun and thought-provoking questions to learn more about each other and help build relationships"



says Fiore-Gunnett.

The event takes place at Sugar Run Brewing Company in Duncansville. The cost is \$25 for Chamber members and \$35 for non-members. There will be sandwiches, grazing boards and a cash bar. You do not need to be a member of the WE-LEaD committee to attend. "We are always excited to see new

faces at our events because that means our goal of connecting with as many professional women in the area as possible is working," says Fiore-Gunnett.

You can register at blairchamber.com or by calling Megan Rossman at (814) 943-8151. The sponsor for the event is Keller Engineers, Inc.

HD500 offers great networking

The Blair County Chamber is currently scheduling locations for HD500 for 2025. HD500 (Hump Day at 5pm) is when area businesses and organizations open their location to the community for an open house and tours. This fun light-hearted after-work event gives attendees the opportunity to enjoy a light menu, win prizes donated by local businesses and catch up with other area professionals, all while spending time getting to know a local business.

When a business hosts an HD500 after hours event it



expands their network giving them a chance to connect with potential customers while also strengthening their presence within the local community. Some businesses host when launching a new product or some host to promote existing services. The host determines what they want to

showcase to attendees.

HD500 is held monthly on Wednesday nights from 5pm to 7pm. The cost to attend is \$10 for Chamber members and \$20 for non-members. To host an HD500 in 2025 contact Jessie Covert at the Chamber at jcovert@blairchamber.com or (814) 943-4181.

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