

Blair Business Mirror



October 2019

Community Contribution

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McLanahan's helping to eliminate misconceptions on Ag

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A Cooperative Effort of the Blair County Chamber and the Altoona Mirror Advertising Department

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COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

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#55769 - Main building has approximately 38,334 sf with 4 loading docks and two ground level overhead doors. Current tenant occupies approximately 3,000 sf of office and 24,534 sf of warehouse space. Approximately 10,800sf in the main building and 1,152 in a detached building currently unoccupied. Call Matt Depaolis 329-3021 with any questions or to tour the building.



#53571 - Prime real estate for sale or lease in revitalized & growing Downtown Altoona. The Heritage Discovery Center offers 14,485 sf for a variety of potential uses such as a restaurant, office space or an event facility. The 1st flr offers spacious open space w/ high ceilings, office space, a conference room, a kitchenette, two ADA restrooms & storage. The stunning curved staircase leads to the large open mezzanine level w/ glass railings open to below and elevator access. Contact the listing agent for more details and to schedule a time to tour the property. Watch my 3D tour <http://perrywellingtonrealty.com/3d-model/1421-12th-ave-altoona-pa/>





Chamber Notes

Will we be architects of our own demise?

There's an election coming-up. Whether or not that means something to you is likely influenced by how seriously you take your rights as an American citizen. Or how ticked-off you are.

Unless you've been out-of-the-loop, you're no doubt aware that your vote carries even greater impact in some elections because so many of your fellow citizens

choose not to be part of the process. It increases your clout in a way that is unfortunate, to say the least.

The voter turnout in the 2019 Primary Election in Blair County was alarmingly low, despite the fact that key positions were at stake. The results of that election were heavily

influenced by a determined collection of voters who were agitated by someone or something and were looking for a change. That strategy is nothing new. This time however, the consequences may be more far-reaching.

With all the progress that has been made in Blair County in branding the area as a destination for business expansion and relocation, the county is still fragile in a number of ways. Many of those ways have at least a loose connection to workforce development. Unless we can provide an educated workforce that meets the needs of at least the current business community, we're in a whole lot of trouble. Much needed business growth, sadly, would be out of the question.

How the Primary Election figures-in to this equation is more of an attitude dilemma than a strategic conundrum. While no one would contest the fact that property tax reassessment and new school

construction are hot-button issues, are we willing to take a broad approach to finding common ground in addressing them? Or has the nastiness that was evident in the campaign messages of several of the candidates during the Primary the preferred method of appealing to voters? There is, after all, a potentially catastrophic outcome to that second option.

An overreaction on my part? I don't think so. Even a dim-bulb like me can dissect the data and appreciate how communities in other parts of the country have thought they were accomplishing something significant by embracing controversy, only to gain a toxic reputation instead.

So concerned about this situation is the Blair County Chamber that the Chamber Board, through its insightful Public Policy Committee, has taken the preliminary steps to create a Political Action Committee (PAC). The purpose of the PAC is not to endorse or fund political candidates. Its purpose is to tackle and support the promotion of issues that will help the county to move forward.

Blair County is a great place to live and work. It has been that for a long time. To remain that way will be a challenge simply because of the growing number of obstacles to prosperity. Many of those obstacles are thrust upon us and are well beyond our ability to offset them. Some are political, others geographic. They take a toll on how we approach the things we can fix.

We need to find ways to work more effectively together to let others see the opportunities that exist here and then commit to making our future as enviable as our past. We have never been a county to focus on finding ways to step-up by stepping-on someone else.

There's no reason to start now.



JOE HURD



Have an opinion?

Tell us! Write a letter to the editor.*

email: opinion@altoonamirror.com

mail: Altoona Mirror Letters, P.O. Box 2008, Altoona, PA 16603

* Letters must include first and last name

Double the Networking



Business After Hours

Hampton Inn



180 Charlotte Dr., Altoona

The staff at the Hampton by Hilton Altoona is excited to host another Blair County Chamber Business After Hours. Join us **Wednesday October 30th** for food, entertainment and some great networking opportunities.

The Hampton Altoona is always looking for ways to improve. In 2019 we officially became a Pet Friendly Hotel, you no longer need to leave any of your family members behind ... including the furry ones. We also implemented the new Hampton breakfast experi-

ence. The new breakfast includes an updated fresh look to the breakfast area and many new breakfast items. In addition to our already outstanding options, our classic Vanilla waffle is now joined by new flavors including Blueberry, Banana Bread, Chocolate and the crowd favorite, Cinnamon Roll. Hampton has also included signature items such as Chobani Greek yogurt smoothies, pressed juices and egg white fritatas.

In addition to our new changes, there are many reasons to book at the Hampton. Families can indulge by booking an extra-large executive suite, relax in the indoor pool and enjoy the filling Hampton Breakfast. You will find all the tools you need when traveling on business, high speed wireless internet and an onsite business center. We can also host your meeting or special event for up to 120 guests in our flexible meeting and event space. Special group rates are also available, just give us a call.

WEDNESDAY, October 30 • 5 -7 p.m.

Park Home



2134 Plank Rd., Duncansville

Park Home is owned locally by the Muccitelli Family. Since 1940, we've been serving customers in all of Central PA. Park Home offers brand name furniture, mattress, and appliances and specializes in home electronics and security. We offer In-Home Design consultations; have a low price guarantee on all of our products, combined with top-notch customer service.

Our knowledge on the products we carry sets us high above the competition. Park Home Store is an authorized dealer of many top brands. We carry all major appliances such as Whirlpool, Frigidaire, GE, Speed Queen and Sub Zero. We also carry a full line of mattresses from names like Tempur-Pedic, Sealy and Stearns and Foster. Our furniture brands include many industry leaders such as Ashley, England, Franklin, Flexsteel, and Vaughn Basset just to name a few. At Park Home, we pride ourselves in being a one-stop shop for your entire home and business lifestyle needs.

Tuesday, November 5 • 5 -7 p.m.

On the Cover: Andrew Wedel, Director of International Business Development for Agriculture at McLanahan Corporation examines an electrical panel being manufactured to be sent to a customer.

On the Cover

Farm-City Month

McLanahan's helping to eliminate misconceptions on Ag

For Andrew Wedel, it's the question that never seems to go away.

"People who know where I work will ask me, 'How are things at the foundry?'" he disclosed. "Many people still believe that we are solely a foundry. While it's still a part of our business, we are so much more."

At McLanahan Corporation in Hollidaysburg, where Wedel is Director of International Business Development for Agriculture, much has changed since the company was founded by James Craig McLanahan in 1835. The company is now a global manufacturer of materials processing equipment that is used in the mining, aggregate and agricultural industries. It has expanded its footprint to include offices in Australia, China, Chile and the United Kingdom. It has also acquired several companies to expand its product offerings.

McLanahan's has more than 400 global employees, 290 of which work in the Hollidaysburg operation. As the Blair County Chamber joins similar organizations in observing Farm-City Month, it's appropriate that employees like those at McLanahan's are recognized for what they do to contribute to the welfare of the community.

"What most people don't know is how the things that we do weave into almost every aspect of their lives and the lives of those all around the world," Wedel acknowledged. "For instance, we crush the coal that goes into electricity generation. We process the sand that goes into making roads, bridges, schools and homes. We also process salt used for snow and ice control."

As it relates to agriculture, McLanahan's processes manure so it can be recycled for bedding



McLanahan Corporation has a worldwide impact on agriculture. Shown here is the company's sand-manure separation system at Durazno, Uruguay.

and so that the effluent can be applied to fields in a more environmentally friendly manner. Its systems can be found on dairy farms all throughout the world. Although a substantial portion of McLanahan's business is in the Midwestern U.S., the company ships equipment around the world to places like Qatar, Uruguay, Russia and Japan.

So how did McLanahan's get so connected to agriculture? It all began with addressing the needs of farmers and their desire to take the best possible care of their animals.

"Most people don't know that sand is the preferred bedding for dairy cows," Wedel explained. "That means cows actually rest

and sleep in sand stalls. There are many benefits to sand. Simply put, sand keeps cows clean, dry and comfortable. Cows that are clean, dry and comfortable produce more milk and are able to remain in the herd longer."

The downside of sand becomes evident when sand is mixed with manure when cows exit stalls. Sand causes premature wear to equipment not designed for sand and it also settles in ponds and pipes. Working with Michigan State University, McLanahan's developed a system for separating sand from manure so that sand can be recycled and the manure can be handled in more environmentally-friendly ways.

"When we began with the Sand-Manure Separation (SMS)

systems, the only thing we offered was the piece of equipment for separating sand from manure," Wedel admitted. "Since then, we developed an entire product line in support of the sand-manure separator. The overwhelming majority of this equipment is manufactured in Blair County."

Clearly, among the misconceptions that exist about agriculture focus heavily on the technology aspect of the industry. Wedel is amazed at the incredible progress that has been made through technology and he has no problem sharing his knowledge and insight with anyone who has an interest.

"The public's perception of agriculture is far from reality,"

he emphasized. "Today's farmers are extremely savvy and are smart businesspeople. Automation is used in all aspects of dairy farming – from milking cows to recording the number of steps a cow takes in a day and for how long she rests. The amount of data available to dairy farmers was unfathomable only ten years ago."

At McLanahan's, technology has provided the ability to remotely monitor equipment anywhere in the world from Hollidaysburg. This makes it easier to step customers through an issue they might be having as opposed to getting on an airplane each time someone needs assistance.

"The new generation of farmers grew up with Smartphones and they like to manage and observe things literally at their fingertips, no matter the time of day and whether they are on or off the farm," Wedel noted. "It's really amazing."

With all the modern innovations, the one challenge that agriculture continues to face is a ready workforce.

"Finding people in general to work in agriculture is extremely difficult," Wedel related. "Believe it or not, there are still those who feel that agriculture is an old, worn-out industry. It's absolutely the opposite. It is new technology that continues to make U.S. farmers the envy of the world as we feed and clothe the world. We need to be reinforcing with our educators, young people and new corporate hires that we participate in a global economy. We need to go wherever business demands lead."

McLanahan Corporation has been a member of the Chamber since 1975.



Leadership in Our Schools

CANDIDATE FORUM

Valuable votes

Chamber committee concerned about School Board elections

As communities in Pennsylvania look to create opportunities for economic growth at a time when the Commonwealth is expected to lose population, it goes without saying that the stakes may never be higher for counties like Blair.

"We recognize that there are certain factors that will separate us in either a positive or negative way from other parts of the state," acknowledged Darin Tornatore, chair of the Blair County Chamber's Board of Directors. "Unless we pay close attention to those factors, the outcomes here may be something different than we hope it will be."

At, or near the top of the list of issues to be addressed is the quality of our county's education system. The willingness of people to move to a community or, for that matter, stay in a community, is often determined by the reputation of its schools.

"If our schools are not well-respected, it diminishes how people look at us," Tornatore pointed out. "We've been fortunate to have had good schools for a long time. Maintaining that will be an ongoing battle."

Committing to high standards for education falls to the school boards of each school district. Generally those boards are able to keep a nice balance between quality and cost. When the scale tips too far in one direction, it creates a concern for economic development organizations like the Chamber and Altoona-Blair County Development (ABCD) Corporation.

"This past primary election, particularly as it involved school board races in the Altoona Area School District and the Hollidaysburg

Area School District, set-off some cautionary alarms," admitted Chamber President Joe Hurd. "A number of the candidates openly campaigned on platforms that appealed to taxpayer sensitivities well ahead of educational quality measures. That's troublesome."

The Public Policy Committee of the Chamber considered putting together candidate forums for school board candidates in each district but felt that with so many candidates still in-play for the general election that some type of optional format would be more practical. So the committee came up with three questions that would help voters determine which candidates better understand the potential consequences of failing to consider the county's economic future.

"It's easy for a candidate to say 'vote for me. I won't raise taxes,'" Hurd admitted. "If that becomes the rallying-cry of school directors and voters place that as the highest priority, Blair County will have a hard time moving forward in so many important respects."

The next couple pages of the Blair Business Mirror show the answers that the school board candidates at Altoona and Hollidaysburg submitted to the Public Policy Committee for publication.

"We appreciate the cooperation that we received to our questions," noted Public Policy Chair Greg White. "We did not mean to exclude the candidates from any other Blair County school district. We chose to include the county's two largest districts since most of our concerns were evident there."



Michael
Baker



Sharon
Bream



Brandon
Burns



Lonna
Frye



Nicole
Hartman



Eric
Haugh



Ron
Johnston



Lois
Kaneshiki



Thomas
McCaffrey



Frank
Meloy



Emanuel
Nichols



Jennifer
Smilnak



Kenneth
Snyder



Doug
Stephens



Timothy
Surkovich



Joshua
Turiano

Q: How would you define your role as a member of the school board?



Altoona Area School District

Michael Baker

My job is to insure that students receive the finest possible education in a safe environment that values both learning and the student as a whole. When educational programming does not work, board members must work with administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members to plot an effective course.

Eric Haugh

The role of the school board is oversight. We need to draw on our strengths as professionals and parents to make decisions that will best serve both our students and our community. We need to ensure accountability and eliminate personal agendas throughout the district.

Frank Meloy

My role would be to work with my fellow board members to formulate and adopt policies, manage the District's financial resources, set local tax rates, approve the hiring of personnel, approve contracts and at times serve in a judicial capacity in employee and student disciplinary situations.

Sharon Bream

I believe my role as a school director is to represent the people of this community. I believe we have a fiduciary responsibility to the community to provide the best education to our students with the funds available. I believe it is our responsibility to live within our means.

Ron Johnston

Our job is to oversee the adoption of policy and fiscal management of the school district. It is to make sure that policy is being followed and the school district is being run in a fiscally sound manner that benefits the students as well as the taxpayers of the community.

Joshua Turiano

I would consider the role as a team member and steward of not only the communities needs but the students as well. It's the school boards mandate to help to ensure students know not only what to think but also how to think.

Hollidaysburg Area School District

Brandon Burns

School board members serve the community that they represent above themselves. I would do this effectively by listening to Parents, Students, Taxpayers, Teachers, and the Administration to understand their perspectives allowing me to make informed decisions that provide a quality education while balancing budgets and meeting state and federal requirements.

Nicole Hartman

As a member of the school board I would be responsible for representing the voters and tax payers while ensuring a quality education for the students in our district.

Thomas McCaffrey

By virtue of being elected by their friends and neighbors within the district, school board directors represent the beliefs and values of the community as expressed in school policy. The superintendent handles student and faculty issues and the board should only get involved as it relates to policy decisions.

Jennifer Smilnak

Did not respond.

Doug Stephens

My role is to serve as one link in the chain of command that keeps our district moving forward. All board members must be a bridge between the families that elect us and the administration, faculty and staff who have been entrusted with the precious vocation of educating our children.

Lonna Frye

My role is to serve as an elected community representative who openly engages in discussion, commits to learning and understanding, and makes informed decisions related to curriculum, policies/ procedures, personnel and finances. My role is to think independently, collaborate willingly, maintain accountability, and operate absent of personal agendas.

Lois Kaneshiki

Aside from the role as defined by the School Code, a Board member must continually ask herself, am I getting the data I need from the administration to be able to evaluate the quality of service we are providing to students, and are taxpayers getting the best value for their investment?

Emanuel Nichols

Strong supporter of students, teacher, and taxpayers. Having a background in environmental/construction, I believe I can renegotiate service contracts/ construction work out for bid to save the district a considerable amount of funds. These funds could be put towards teachers, administrative, and maintenance workers salary.

Kenneth Snyder

I would be a member that has a good overview of the entire operation. I have my own special interests in 1. Education opportunities in our area to provide for the local work force. 2. Specific classes in economics for Jr. and Sr. students. 3. A watchful eye on tax payer dollars.

Timothy Surkovich

If you look at the guidelines for school board members it states clearly that school directors represent the community, are district leaders, and are stewards of the district's children, and its tax dollars. They are also to be advocates of public education. That's exactly how I plan to serve.

Q: What role do you see the K-12 education system playing in our community's overall economic development efforts?



Altoona Area School District

Michael Baker

The school district must work in concert with legislative, business and community stakeholders to make the area an attractive option for families and businesses to take root. An innovative, progressive school district is a very important piece of the puzzle.

Eric Haugh

With many goods and services being bought and sold over the internet, profit margins are extremely low. Businesses are looking for low taxes and cheap labor to gain an economic advantage. It's up to our local government to provide incentives to spark economic growth. Our job as a school district is to educate students.

Frank Meloy

Our children are our future and our educational system has the important role of preparing children for the future. Our world has become complex and not only must children have the ability to read, write and compute but they must have the ability to solve problems and possess skills needed to succeed in the 21st Century.

Sharon Bream

I believe this area has many problems that hinder economic development. Some believe a new school will bring people to this area therefore help the economic development. I don't see that happening. Economic development will happen when this area creates a business friendly environment.

Ron Johnston

We must ensure our graduates are prepared for the 21st century workplace. We must continually update our curriculum as well as our methods of instruction to give our kids the tools to be successful for whatever career path they choose. A well trained work force is vital to economic development.

Joshua Turiano

The importance of education for our community cannot be overstated. We cannot attract businesses to the area on tax breaks alone, the work force must be educated enough to meet their needs.

Hollidaysburg Area School District

Brandon Burns

Blair County needs students to graduate with skills necessary to be the workforce of the future. Economic Development is driven by people with a well-rounded foundation in Academics, Arts, and Vocational/Technical programs. A solid K-12 education helps students pursue their passion and develop a life-time love of learning.

Nicole Hartman

The education system directly affects property value and economic growth. Higher ranked districts attract homeowners and businesses to the area in return strengthening local economy. Increased taxes have the opposite effect.

Thomas McCaffrey

Businesses need a qualified pool of local workers from which to build their organizations. Students are searching for relevant coursework that they can envision preparing them for the future. These needs can both be met by a partnership between the business community and the local schools to provide guest speakers, job shadowing, and internships.

Jennifer Smilnak

Did not respond.

Doug Stephens

A thriving K-12 school system promotes a thriving community. Local economic development stems from the notion that we, as a school district, are creating an educational institution that is second to none, and are thereby attracting businesses and their families to the greater Blair County region.

Lonna Frye

In today's world, K-12 education needs to be as much about human development of the student as book learning. Education is still A-B-Cs and 1-2-3s, but it must also include critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. Education makes human beings better, and better human beings make stronger communities.

Lois Kaneshiki

It is critical that we have quality education to attract families and business to our community. We must consider that tax levels are also a consideration when people choose a place to live and do business. We should be aware that excessive government spending "crowds-out" private investment.

Emanuel Nichols

Without a doubt there isn't enough emphasis on trades. We see a great shortage of qualified people to fill the positions; in a lot of cases making a substantial salary. With the right training, with no debt, most of the time is what can be achieved fast by our students.

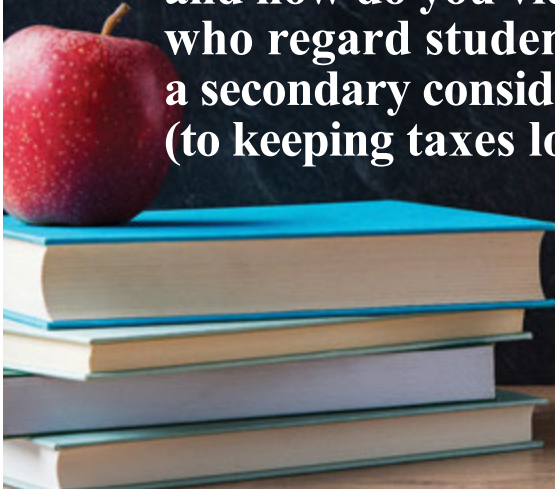
Kenneth Snyder

I see K-12 as the most essential part of any person's life, it is the gold standard for productivity in any community. This is the real shaping time.

Timothy Surkovich

A school is both a place- a public school- and a set of partnerships between the school and community resources. A great deal of research shows that integrating schools with the community leads to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities, which leads to strong economic development.

Q: How important to you is the reputation of your school district and how do you view school directors who regard student achievement as a secondary consideration (to keeping taxes low)?



Altoona Area School District

Michael Baker

The AASD board's partisan grandstanding over the past two years sets a terrible example for our students and has given this once-proud district a black eye. It is time to return the AASD to its former status as one of Pennsylvania's most innovative school districts.

Eric Haugh

Low taxes and student achievement are unrelated. The teachers, not a high priced building, prepare our students for the future. Universities still teach freshman "weed out" courses on a white board in old lecture halls. Achievement is measured when our students are prepared for this environment, pass these courses, and contribute to society.

Frank Meloy

My wife and I are the proud parents of six children, all of whom graduated from the Altoona Area School District and all living as successful adults. I am running for the School Board to assure that our grandchildren are offered the same educational opportunities that their parents had.

Sharon Bream

Reckless spending has created an extremely serious financial situation that can't be ignored. This problem is going to require the incoming board to make changes that we do not want to make. In a couple of years our fund balance will be depleted and the State will be forced to take over our school.

Ron Johnston

Anyone who is not interested in looking at the whole picture and maintaining a balance between what is best for the students and what the community can afford should not be a candidate for school board.

Joshua Turiano

Reputation is important because it reflects not only the board but the schooling and the community itself. Many parents choose on where to live based on a district's performance. Those decisions compound into less taxes and resources for that district. Investing in our children's educations is an investment in the future. You can make smart investments without calling it reckless spending.

Hollidaysburg Area School District

Brandon Burns

A school's reputation is central to the community it represents. People have many choices where to live and the strength of the school district and achievement of its student body affects population, tax income, and overall growth. School directors must balance the needs of the student body, taxpayers, and community.

Nicole Hartman

As a parent of students in the district, I expect the reputation of the district to be held in high regard. Researching curriculum to be voted on is extremely important. I do not however support a raise in taxes. A quality education should be available with the current budget.

Thomas McCaffrey

The reputation of your school district can have a dramatic effect on the resale value of your home. School performance is a key factor in attracting new businesses to the area, as well as talented workers looking to relocate. If our community is to grow and prosper, we cannot elect shortsighted people to school boards.

Jennifer Smilnak

Did not respond.

Doug Stephens

As a teacher, I always sought to instill a sense of school pride in my students, as exemplified by their achievements. As a school board member (and a tax payer), I intend to put the needs of our students first, thus ensuring the success of our district for generations to come.

Lonna Frye

Reputation is paramount! A district with principled leaders, empowered educators, commitment to technology, strong curriculum, and sensible stewardship will turn out enthusiastic students pointed for academic and personal success. Directors who injudiciously predetermine a tax stance are imposing a personal agenda that's potentially short-sighted.

Lois Kaneshiki

If student achievement and quality education are your first and highest priorities, you will not have to worry about your District's reputation. There is plenty of data to show that high quality education need not directly correlate with higher spending. Resources must be prioritized where the most value is gained.

Emanuel Nichols

The reputation of Hollidaysburg school district is everything. Student achievement is something that means a lot to me. No outside or inside influence will change my mind when it comes to what's best for the students/teachers. I believe the majority of taxpayers like myself just want to see the funds spent wisely.

Kenneth Snyder

As to reputation, student achievement is paramount but not in an elitist sense but in a solid concern for the welfare of our own children. That does not mean however just throwing money in a wasteful way. You do the best with what you have.

Timothy Surkovich

I feel the values of the school district and the community should reflect one another. As a candidate I am running on 5 core principles: Being Tax-Payer Friendly and Fiscally Responsible, Committed to Quality Educational and Support Programs, a Relentless Pursuit of Safe Schools, and providing Strong Leadership and Professionalism.

County Commissioner candidates answer questions from committee

Which candidates for Blair County Commissioner best support the local business agenda?

That's what the Blair County Chamber's Public Policy Committee wanted to know. So they invited candidates Ted Beam, Laura Burke, Bruce Erb and Amy Webster to meet with the committee individually on September 11th to answer a list of questions about the county's future as it pertains to economic development and business expansion.

"We were impressed by

the willingness of the candidates to share their feelings and provide insight on what they believe will be necessary to move the county forward," explained Public Policy Committee Chair Greg White. "As a committee and a business organization, we have a number of priorities that are important for us to get in front of our elected officials."

The interviews with the County Commissioner candidates were videotaped and can be accessed by going to the Blair County Chamber YouTube Channel.



Blair County Commissioner Ted Beam is welcomed by Lisa Hann of Family Services to the Q&A Forum, sponsored by the Public Policy Committee of the Blair County Chamber. Hann is a member of the Public Policy Committee.

It's Happening!

"Down on the Farm" Event is This Thursday

One of the Chamber's largest family-type events will take place this Thursday, October 10th from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at 4 Seasons Farm in Tyrone. "Down on the Farm" has been a heavily-attended event for many years as it provides an opportunity for adults and children to experience the best of what the Ag community has to offer. The cost to attend Down on the Farm is \$10/person. Children 10-and-under are free. Reservations can be made by calling the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online. Sponsors for the Down on the Farm event are AgChoice Farm Credit, Blair County Conservation District, DelGrosso Foods, KIZ Resources and M&T Bank, Stuckey Automotive-Stuckey Ford & Stuckey Subaru. *Directions to the Farm: From Altoona, take I-99 to Bellwood. At the end of exit turn left. Continue to the signal light. At the light turn right. Continue straight past Delgrosso Park. At the signal light right after park, turn left onto Tipton Road. Turn right onto Grazierville Road. Pacanowsky Lane will be on the right. Watch for the signage!*

Non-Profits to Hold Networking Event at the Buccinese Society

The Blair County Chamber's Committee of Non-Profits will hold a networking event on Tuesday, October 22nd from 4:30 to 6:30

p.m. at the Buccinese Society in Altoona. Cost to attend is just \$15/Chamber Members and \$20/non-members and includes a full Italian buffet. The event includes bocce, networking and the opportunity to relax in a great environment. To make a reservation, please call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online www.blairchamber.com.

The Chamber is Now on Instagram!!

Instagram is a great marketing and networking tool now being utilized by the Chamber. Similar to Facebook, Instagram allows likes, tags, comments, and shares. Instagram uses images to attract an audience as they scroll through their news feed. Adding hashtags to each post helps reach individuals who follow certain topics. How can this help your business? The Chamber will be able to tag your Instagram account and create a broader audience. Follow the Chamber on Instagram @blaircounty-chamberofcommerce.

Schurr to Co-Chair Attractions/Hotel Roundtable

Patrick Schurr, Area Director of Sales for Hospitality Asset Management Company, has been named co-chair of the Attractions/Hotel Roundtable. The Roundtable is a partnership between the Blair County Chamber and Explore Altoona. Schurr replaces Jeff Cipriani of Hampton Inn Altoona who resigned the position in August.

toona who resigned the position in August.

Have You Given Your Employees Their Power Cards?

The Blair County Chamber has nearly 41,000 members. That's because every employee of every member-business is considered a member. So, technically, there should be 41,000 Chamber Power Cards in circulation. The Power Card program provides Chamber members with the opportunity to offer discounted products and services to other Chamber members, thereby keeping more dollars circulating close to home. The list of participating businesses can be accessed from the Chamber Website or by scanning the QR-Code on the back of the card. If your employees don't have Power Cards, contact the Chamber Office at (814) 943-8151 and we'll arrange to get some to you. If you'd like to place a Power Card offer, contact Jessie Covert at the Chamber. There's no cost to Chamber Members to place offers.

Chamber Helping to Promote Armed Intruder Conference

The Chamber is partnering with one of its members on an event that carries incredible significance to the business community. The 4th Annual Preparing for an Armed Intruder Conference will be held on Monday, October 14th from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Altoona Grand Hotel. Survival Mindset, a member of the Chamber, has gained an impressive reputation for producing high impact programs dealing with topics of great urgency from the standpoint

of safety and security. This event will add to that reputation. The cost to attend the conference is \$140/person. However, Chamber Members can attend for just \$99/person by using the discount code BCCC. To register, click on <https://pfaai-altoonapa.eventbrite.com>.

Chamber Board Approves Five New Members

At its September 19th meeting, the Chamber's Board of Directors approved the following new members: Amerway, Inc. of Altoona, Harry's Construction of Altoona, Point of Fitness of Duncansville, RT&T Logistics of Hollidaysburg and YTI Career Institute of Altoona.

Congratulations . . .

. . . to Saint Francis University's Nursing BSN program which has been ranked #1 in the United States by rncareers.org.

. . . to Kristin delGiudice and Kimberly Shope, teachers in the Altoona Area School District, who recently received Educator CARE Awards for excellence in the classroom. delGiudice received the elementary award; Shope the secondary award.

. . . to Cullen Sheehan, an Allstate Insurance agent and a member of the Chamber's Board of Directors, was recently recognized by The Allstate Foundation as an outstanding volunteer and earned a Helping Hands grant. That grant resulted in \$1,000 being awarded to both Family Services, Inc. and the Hollidaysburg Area Summer Baseball League.

LBC Class of 2020 brings passion, talent

If there was anything in particular that came to light when the new class of the Chamber's Leadership Blair County program came together for the first time on September 13th, it was that there was no shortage of passion among its members. A lot of talent as well.

"That's one of the first things I noticed," acknowledged class member Shasta Langenbacher. "This class has some really amazing people. It will be great to be with them all year."

The 2020 Class is the 26th LBC class. It has nineteen members, twelve of which are female. Several are relatively new to the area.

"I've lived here for a little over two years," stated Emily Hall. "Really being able to learn about the community is important to me. Everything I've heard about the program has been positive."

Jonathan Rice recently moved to the area from Harrisburg.

"I'm really excited about being here," he pointed out. "The more

that I can learn about the area, the better my overall transition will be."

Jocelyn Wolf is returning to the area after being away for ten years.

"I wasn't exactly sure what I'd find," Wolf noted. "I'm excited to reconnect and I feel that LBC is the best way to make that happen."

For more information on Leadership Blair County, contact the Blair County Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or visit the Chamber Website at www.blairchamber.com.



The 2020 Leadership Blair County Class.

'Breakfast Club' Presentation to focus on local agriculture

There are few people in Blair County who understand Blair County agriculture any better than Gary Long. A custom operator of services to local farmers in Sinking Valley, Long knows the ins and outs associated with operating a successful farm, the regulatory aspects of staying in compliance and the all-too-often consequences of uncooperative weather.

At the next Blair County Chamber "Breakfast Club" this Thursday, Long will speak about, "The Challenges and Opportunities" of Blair County Agriculture." His presentation will provide an overview of what farmers in the county face each day, how technology has made a difference and how the business community can more effectively interact with the agricultural commu-

nity to bolster the county's economy.

The cost to attend Breakfast Club is \$20 for Chamber Members and \$30 for non-members. To register, contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com

Corporate sponsor of the October Breakfast Club is Leonard S. Fiore, Inc.

Williamsburg couple to receive ACE Award



Jack and Peggy Mock are the 2019 recipients of the Chamber's Agricultural Excellence Award.

Jack and Peggy Mock of Williamsburg will be the 2019 recipients of the Blair County Chamber's Agricultural Community Excellence (ACE) Award. The award will be presented at the Farm-City Dinner on November 6th.

The Mock's have been involved in production agriculture for many years, raising beef and sheep. Although farming isn't their primary occupation, the Mock's have influenced the agricultural community by serving as 4-H leaders for the past 24 years. Their involvement and enthusiasm with the Lamb Club has encouraged both 4-H and FFA members to exhibit lambs at the County Show.

In addition, Jack serves as president and Peggy treasurer of the Junior Livestock Pro-

gram. Peggy spends countless hours gathering sponsorships for the Blair County Junior Livestock Show and Sale. Jack helps with weigh-ins and the tagging of all species as well.

The Mock's were both honored and surprised to be receiving the ACE Award.

"We're shocked," Peggy admitted. "We certainly never expected it. We've known other people who have received the award for things they've done in the community. It's a wonderful honor for us."

Jack agreed.

"It was a huge surprise when they called to let us know that we had won it," he noted. "It never occurred to us that we'd be considered."

Sponsorships and tickets are both available by calling the Chamber at (814) 943-8151.

Your Opinion Counts!

Send a Letter to the Editor

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MAIL: Altoona Mirror Letters, PO Box 2008, Altoona, PA 16603

*Letters must include first and last name

Job Fair set for October 16th

The closing of a number of significant Blair County businesses and the downsizing of a few others has spurred the planning of a Job Fair for October 16th at the Jaffa Shrine Center. The event is being sponsored by the Blair County Chamber of Commerce, Altoona-Blair County Development Corporation, Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission and PA CareerLink.

From 10:00 to 10:30 a.m., only those veterans seeking employment opportunities will be permitted to attend. From 10:30 until 2:00 p.m., all others may attend. There are currently 85 businesses that have registered to attend as exhibitors.

"We have maxed-out our space," acknowledged Gwen Fisher of PA CareerLink. "All exhibitors have jobs to offer right now. We're hoping to have a large turnout of job-seekers and all indications are that we will."

This event may not be the last one in 2019, according to Chamber President Joe Hurd.



"As we look at workforce development issues, not only in Blair County but throughout our region, it's important that we continue to create avenues where businesses can have access to potential employees," he noted. "It's great that ABCD, Southern Alleghenies, CareerLink and the Chamber can work effectively together to make this happen."

Anyone interested in attending the Job Fair should just show up. There is no advance registration.

Sweat for Vets Challenge raises funds, awareness

By Jayme Orr Rhodes

Looking for a new challenge? Interested in helping our local Veterans? Then you need to get involved with the 6th annual Sweat for Vets Challenge to be held November 3, 2019 at the Brush Mountain Sportsman's Club! There are so many races in the area, however this one is completely unique and special because it is more than a race.

What is Sweat for Vets? SFV was started by a group of local Veterans who wanted to accomplish two things: 1) give back to our LOCAL Veterans and 2) do this in a way that promotes exercise and wellness. The event is comprised of 2 trail challenges. The 10K starts at the base of Brush Mountain, where participants then run / hike on the trails up across the powerline to the top of the mountain, and then back down. The terrain is rugged and challenging.

The 5k option is a nice rolling course designed to



make you sweat, but also inviting enough to be suitable for hikers and runners of all ability levels. If you are not familiar with this location, it is off the Pinecroft Exit of I-99, where the massive powerline is. The view at the top is breathtaking and gives our participants a real sense of accomplishment.

We are proud to say we have raised over \$125,000 for local Veteran charities. Sweat for Vets is able to bring the funds and awareness to these organi-

zations so they are able to continue their operations and help veterans throughout the year. These charities include the Altoona VA Hospital Homeless / Emergency Fund, Hollidaysburg Vets Home Activities Fund, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Armed Forces Mothers, and the Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship Center.

So many people ask us "What can we do to help our Veterans?" Our organization is proud to have an event that donates 100% of all net proceeds to help care for the needs of local Veterans. Please email us at info@s4v.org or visit our website s4v.org, if you would be interested in participating or sponsoring the event.

Not a runner? That is ok too as we require a large body of volunteers to host another great event! Did I mention we have free beer??? See you November 3rd!

Grazier to speak at Farm-City Dinner

Dave Grazier, the Vice-President and General Manager of Kunzler & Company will be the keynote speaker at the Chamber's Farm-City Dinner, which will be held on November 6th at Freedom Township Fire Hall.

Grazier's presentation will be "Meeting the Demands of Today's Consumer." He is a longtime Blair County resident and a former member of the Chamber's Board of Directors.

As always, the highlight of the Farm-City Dinner is the presentation of the Agricultural Community Excellence Award. That award will be presented to



DAVE GRAZIER

Jack & Peggy Mock of Williamsburg.

The Farm-City event begins with a Milk/Punch Reception at 6:30 p.m., followed by the dinner at 7:00 p.m. Once again, the Farm-City Dinner will be a family-style turkey dinner, served by local FFA students. The cost of tickets is \$20.

There are also sponsorship opportunities. Call Jessie Covert at (814) 943-8151 to reserve a sponsorship. Tickets for the dinner can be purchased at the Chamber Office or

from any member of the Farm-City Committee.

Welcome New Members...

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Altoona, PA 16601
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410 Walnut Street
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(814) 494-6645
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YTI Career Institute

Ms. Vicki Kane
2900 Fairway Drive
Altoona, PA 16602
(814) 656-8578
Employment/Training



Main Street Roundtable 2019

By Explore Altoona Staff

An audience of 26 community stakeholders and municipal leaders from six different communities across the Greater Blair County region attended the fifth annual Main Street Roundtable held recently in Tyrone. This yearly opportunity is coordinated by Explore Altoona with an intended goal of helping Blair County communities to become more visitor ready. Each town has a unique story to tell the visitor and holds a special sense of place within the County's visitor experience.

Speakers for this year's event included Mandy Book, Director of the Center for Community Enhancement at PA's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and Julie Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of the PA Downtown Center. Mandy provided an update on downtown and resi-

dential neighborhood initiatives as well as a reinforcement of opportunities within DCED's programs. Julie provided a synopsis of PDC membership benefits and programming as well as ideas on downtown revitalization and next steps following any one community's annual technical site visit. PDC is the only statewide non-profit organization which focuses on core commercial district development issues.

Dave Cadle, a community stakeholder from Williamsburg, said, "I very much appreciated the Roundtable event. As Williamsburg moves forward, the information from the Roundtable will help us make much more informed decisions and in addition to the presentations, the networking with other communities was equally valuable. We have found Explore Altoona to be

very helpful and an amazing resource."

Explore Altoona invests in a group membership with the PDC for the City of Altoona and any borough within Blair County. Two primary benefits within these individual community memberships is the annual opportunity for an update of demographic information for each individual community as well as a technical site visit with PDC staff to assess that community's unique needs and progress in downtown development. Technical site visits have been conducted in the communities of Altoona, Hollidaysburg, Martinsburg, Roaring Spring, Williamsburg, and Tyrone. For more information on the Main Street Roundtable or on the PA Downtown Center, please contact Mark Ickes at mickes@explorealtoona.com.



Julie Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of the PA Downtown Center, addresses the Roundtable audience.

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Wingate to host 'Business Before Hours'

Wingate by Wyndham Altoona will host the next Blair County Chamber "Business Before Hours" on Tuesday, October 15th from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. The Wingate, which is the county's newest hotel, is located at 909 Chestnut Avenue.

"We want to show people the great property that this is," explained Patrick Schurr, Director of Sales and Marketing. "The location is great - it's close to (UPMC) the hospital and to Penn State Altoona and only three minutes away from I-99."

The Wingate is part of Lion Country Lodging and is one of

three Blair County hotels under that banner. The other two are the Courtyard by Marriott and Microtel Inn & Suites.

The Business Before Hours will feature tours of the hotel as well as a buffet breakfast. Attendees will also have an opportunity to win tickets to an upcoming Penn State football game.

There is no cost for Chamber Members to attend Business Before Hours. Non-Members can attend for \$10.00. To register, contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com.



Among those looking forward to welcoming Chamber Members to the upcoming "Business Before Hours" at Wingate by Wyndham Altoona are, left to right: Sue St. Martin, Assistant Manager; Patrick Schurr, Director of Sales and Marketing; and Angi McCaulley, Front Desk Guest Service Agent.

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guaran.teez program underway thanks to Leadership Alumni

For the past eight years, the Leadership Blair County Alumni Association has been looking for ways to make a positive impact in the local community. Most recently that effort has been the Basket of Hope program, done in cooperation with Family Services Incorporated.

This year, the LBC Alumni have changed gears and created a program called guaran.teez which raised money to provide a week's worth of tee-shirts to 378 students at Penn Lincoln Elementary School in Altoona. Of the 378 students enrolled in the program, 337 (89%) of them are considered economically disadvantaged.

"Thanks to the LBC Alumni, every student has received five shirts (4 short sleeved and 1 long sleeved)," explained Penn Lincoln Principal Eric Dambeck. "It's making a significant difference in how students view themselves and each other and it's allowing us to create other programs within the school that will encourage involvement."

Penn Lincoln is in the process of converting to a magnet school focusing on career development and STEAM curriculum. The school is hard at work to combat the stigma of the "haves" and "have-nots" and LBC Alumni's program has already helped.



Students from Penn Lincoln School in Altoona show-off their STEAM Learning Center t-shirts that were provided through donations to the Leadership Blair County Alumni.

Any suggestions or comments about the Blair Business Mirror, call Joe Hurd at (814) 943-8151 or email him at jhurd@blairchamber.com.

Understanding the scholarship umbrella

By Jodi Cessna

Autumn is absolutely my favorite time of the year. I just love that there are so many beautiful and different colors in our landscape. This makes me think about how things can be so different and yet all part of the same picture.

Just like at the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation, there are many different types of funds all under the same "umbrella." Yes, we have scholarship foundations (most people understand this type of foundation so I won't explain it) but we also have many other different types of foundations - undesignated, designated, donor-advised, field-of-interest, and agency.

Undesignated foundations allow the Community Foundation to respond to the most pressing needs of our communities. The income from this type of foundation will provide grants that can help different organizations and projects each year. This is such an incredible type of



giving for a donor who loves our community and wants to provide for a better future. None of us know what the future needs in our community will be and wouldn't it be wonderful to know that our community has funding for them?

A designated foundation provides an annual income to support one or more charities that the donor selects when they establish their foundation. Let's face it, you can't make a gift to your favorite charities after you are no longer here, that is unless your foundation is doing this for you.

A donor advised foundation lets the donor, and others the donor names, provide recommendations for charitable funding annually. This is a simple and inexpensive alternative to a private foundation.

A field-of-interest foundation is for an area of concern that the donor specifies, such as education, animals or the Arts. Each year your foundation will support a promising project in that area.

Last but not least, the agency foundation. These foundations are established by a charitable organization instead of establishing their own foundation. This provides long-term funding for the organization while alleviating the administrative work. So now you can see that sometimes there is more to the picture than you see at first glance. If you would like more information about how to create any of these types of foundations, please contact our office at (814) 944-6102. We would love to help you achieve your charitable goals!

Jodi Cessna is the Executive Director of the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation.

Workplace Wellness Toolkit available on Chamber site

Businesses that have an interest in implementing programs that address the wellness of their employees now have a resource to get the process started. The Blair County Chamber's Workplace Wellness Committee, in cooperation with Healthy Blair County Coalition, has created a Workplace Wellness Toolkit. The Toolkit contains step-by-step instructions on how to get started and offers suggestions on ways to get employees to buy-in.

"The Toolkit speaks to the challenges that many employers face in helping employees to lead healthier lives and perform better in the workplace," explained Chamber President Joe Hurd. "It also addresses problems specific to Blair County that can be overcome with just a few minor changes

in focus and perspective."

The Toolkit was launched at the Chamber's "Wake Up to Wellness" event on September 10th. That event included educational presentations by business leaders who have either implemented wellness programs at their own businesses or who have strategies that employers can use to make their wellness efforts cost-effective.

Keynote speaker at Wake Up to Wellness was Greg Drew, President of Value Drug Company. Value Drug has made employee wellness a high priority and has an impressive track record of success in its efforts.

To access the Workplace Wellness Toolkit, visit the Chamber Website at www.blairchamber.com and click-on the icon.



Greg Drew, President of Value Drug Company, was the keynote speaker at the Chamber's "Wake-Up to Wellness" program.

YEA!

Sixteen Young Entrepreneurs begin classes today

Year #4 of the Blair County Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) program begins at 8:15 a.m. today at the Sheetz Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence in Altoona. Sixteen students from grades 9-12 comprise this class.

"It looks like another excellent group of young people," reported Royce Boyd, who begins her third year as Program Manager. "From the interviews, there's little doubt that there is already a wide range of ideas for creative businesses. As always, it will be fun to watch those ideas come to fruition."

The 25-week program takes place each Tuesday during the school day. One week the class session is from 8:15 to 11:15 a.m., the next week it's 11:15 to 2:15 p.m. This is done so that the students don't miss the same classes at their schools two weeks in a row. Each school provides transportation for their students to the Sheetz Center.

The YEA! program is a national initiative, headquartered in Rochester, New York. Besides the weekly classes, it also features a CEO Roundtable event and an Investor Panel event which helps students to fund their business ideas. So far, 52 students have graduated from the Blair County Chamber's YEA! program during the first three years.

"What the students learn in this program is how to start an actual business," Boyd disclosed. "They learn how to write a business plan and they make contact with people in the business community who help them turn their dreams into reality. Many of the students in this new class applied because previous class members told them how great the program is. That's the type of recommendations that are the most valuable."

For more information on the YEA! program, contact the Blair County Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or visit www.blairchamber.com



Morgan Baker (left), and YEA! student from Altoona Area High School, enjoys some conversation at the YEA! Orientation with Elizabeth Gibbons and Morgan's mother Sara Baker.

Chamber presents initial Sustainability Certifications

At its September 12th "Breakfast Club," the Blair County Chamber presented its first Sustainability Certifications. Those Certifications were presented to four local businesses who completed the Sustainable Blair County Survey and achieved the Bronze Level. Five other businesses were also recognized at the Breakfast Club for completing the survey but not yet qualifying at one of the three levels.

"The Survey is very comprehensive and the criteria is demanding," explained Chris Foster of Stiffler McGraw, who is vice-chair of the Sustainable Blair County Committee. "A business really has to make a commitment to completing it but the benefits are outstanding."

Stiffler McGraw is one of the Bronze Level achievers. The other three are Great Commission Schools, Prime Sirloin Restaurant and U.S. Hotel Tavern. Keller Engineers, Roaring Spring Public Library, Advantage Resource Group, Roaring Spring Blank Book and Veeder-Root were the five businesses that completed the Survey.

The Sustainable Blair County Committee is hoping that other businesses will step-up to complete the Survey.

"Any business that is really serious about sustainability and wants to save money, should take a good look at this opportunity," Foster pointed out. To access the Survey, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or email to jhurd@blairchamber.com.



Among the businesses recognized by the Chamber's Sustainable Blair County were, left to right (seated): Great Commission Schools (Jen McConnell), Prime Sirloin and U.S. Hotel Tavern (Don Delozier), and Stiffler McGraw (Josh Chestney) - Standing are: Advantage Resource Group (Bonnie Williams), Keller Engineers (Brittany Eckenrode), Roaring Spring Paper Products (Dave Shriver), Roaring Spring Community Library (Michelle McIntyre), and Veeder-Root Company (Stefan Long).

Wake Up With Us!
*Day After Day.
 Year After Year.*



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New Members



The Blair County Chamber of Commerce welcomed its newest members at the 546th Breakfast Club in September. Pictured, from left: Darin Tornatore, Blair County Chamber of Commerce Board Chairman; Jamie Miller, **Aircon Engineering Inc.**; Melany Tapia, **Tapia Technology Consulting**; Crystal Miller, **The Chempistry Store**.

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Ribbon-cutting



events

Born Learning Trail



The Chamber held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the Born Learning Trail located at Lakemont Park. The Born Learning Trail promotes education through play by promoting interactive learning in a playground setting. Pictured at the ribbon, from left: Bonnie Hand, Chamber Ambassador; Andrea Cohen, President, Lakemont Park; Chelsea Hallinan, Begin with Us; Jeremy Courtney, General Manager, Lakemont Park; Mayor Matt Pacifico, City of Altoona; Bruce Erb, Blair County Commissioner; Melanie Shildt, Executive Director, United Way of Blair County; Joe Hurd, President and CEO, Blair County Chamber of Commerce; Donna Gority, United Way of Blair County, Board of Directors; Wendy Long, United Way of Blair County, Board of Directors; Rachel Prosser, United Way of Blair County; Sherri Stayer, Chamber Ambassador.

Tenley Rehabilitation Therapy Center



The Tenley Rehabilitation Therapy Center at Homewood at Martinsburg, located at 437 Givler Drive, celebrated its official grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The new Tenley Rehabilitation Therapy Center consists of a larger space with updated equipment. The new space will allow the Functional Pathways therapy staff to provide therapy to a growing number of patients. Pictured at the ribbon, from left: Sherri Stayer, Chamber Ambassador; Gary Snyder, Kathy's Place; Candace McMullen, COO and Vice President of Operation, Homewood Retirement Center; Bruce Erb, Blair County Commissioner; Lisa De-fibaugh, Executive Director, Homewood at Martinsburg; Betty Karuder; Michael Koehle, Occupational Therapist; Joe Hurd, President and CEO, Blair County Chamber of Commerce; Patrick Himes, The Office of Congressman John Joyce; Nancy McClelland, Chamber Ambassador.