

Blair Business Mirror



March 2020

Building Dreams

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#57176 - 1 Mixed use building in downtown Altoona. The main level is occupied by a long term commercial tenant and the second floor has three residential units. There is also a private parking lot with 13 spaces. Call Matt Depaolis at 329-3021 for details and showings.





Chamber Notes

The childcare challenge sprouts new roots

The loud thud that businesses in Pennsylvania may have heard on February 28th was the other shoe emphatically hitting the floor. On that day, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced the results of a new study that reveals the cost of childcare challenges in four states. Those states are Idaho, Iowa, Mississippi and, you guessed it, Pennsylvania.

The study found that due to childcare issues, Pennsylvania loses an estimated \$3.47 billion annually for the state's economy. This number includes \$591 million

annual loss in tax revenue as well as an annual loss to Pennsylvania employers of \$2.88 billion on absences and employee turnover as a result of childcare breakdowns.

Other considerations included the fact that at least 55% of

parents in Pennsylvania reported missing work due to childcare issues in the past three months and approximately four in ten parents postponed school or a training program for those same issues.

The unveiling of the study results took place at the U.S. Chamber Foundation's Early Education Summit. I had the opportunity to attend that event since the Blair County Chamber has placed such a high priority on early childhood education.

Our focus, however, has been quite different. We've encouraged the business and education communities to commit talent and resources to help our future workforce to get off to a great start academically and socially. Statistics show that those young people between the ages of three-and-five miss the greatest period of brain development without some kind of stimulation through high quality early education.

Through our BASICS Subcommittee on Early Childhood Education, we've even created an Early Learning Impact Fund. That fund, to which a number of local businesses have pledged financial support over a three-year period, is designed to help early childhood providers to improve their quality lev-

els. Over time, it's hoped that it can also assist families who can't fully afford the cost of quality care.

In reality, it should come as no surprise that there are more consequences for failing to educate the pre-school crowd than just having them fall behind their more fortunate peers. At the Early Education Summit, flashing repeatedly on a message board was this: Pennsylvania is building the strongest workforce in the nation and childcare issues are the biggest obstacles in that process.

Rhetoric? Maybe. But the numbers don't lie and our numbers far exceed those of the other three states in the study. Yet those states too, have distinct challenges.

"Iowa has the largest number of women in the workforce of any other state," acknowledged Mike Ralston, President of the Iowa Association of Business and Industry. "It also has the highest labor force participation in the country so businesses are desperate to find workers. The childcare problem magnifies it"

Idaho is in worse shape, according to Alex LaBeau, President of the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry.

"Idaho is one of the few states that doesn't invest in pre-school," he disclosed. "Only 20% of our eligible children are being served. Families are struggling and children are struggling. This is much more of a productivity issue than it is an educational issue."

And finally there's Mississippi, the frequent butt of jokes for having a less-than-stellar educational system. Believe it or not, they're the only one of the four states showing improvement.

"We've done a lot," admitted Scott Waller, President and CEO of the Mississippi Economic Council. "We've formed an Early Childhood Academy at every community college in Mississippi. Our Early Learning Collaborative allows people to select where their tax dollars go. Our business community has really stepped-up to the plate. 79% of people in Mississippi believe that Early Childhood Education will make a difference in helping our state to prosper. The results are already showing promise."

It needs to happen here. We've got no shoes left to drop.



Business After Hours

East Freedom Surgical Associates



15721 Dunnings Highway,
Duncansville

For years Dr. Stephen Yanoshak saw a need for an outpatient facility that was centrally located for the community. Dr. Yanoshak's vision of enhancing the patient experience was the mission of the surgery center, which was in the planning for many years. The need for a convenient outpatient facility, centrally located to serve the surrounding counties of west central Pennsylvania earned the support and backing from community members and healthcare providers. Our efforts came to fruition in March of 2017. After an extensive and carefully planned construction and credentialing process, we were able to open our doors to the public March 6, 2019. We are now equipped to facilitate multiple surgical subspecialties in a convenient, easily accessible location for patients. The surgery center provides patients with high quality care at a lower cost and greater ease of access off Interstate 99 and we look forward to other subspecialty surgeons joining the center to provide added choice to patients in Blair and surrounding counties.

Thursday, March 26 • 5-7 p.m.

New Members



The Blair County Chamber of Commerce welcomed its newest members at the 551st Breakfast Club in February. Pictured, from left, Chris Rogers and Christina Galasso, JWF INDUSTRIES; Michael DeAngelo and Catherine Huber-DeAngelo, YOUR CBD STORE; Darin Tornatore, Chairman, Blair County Chamber Board of Directors.

On the Cover: YEA! student Landon Davis gains valuable insight from his mentor, Doug Hershey of Thought iQ, LLC.

On the Cover

YEA!: Innovative program continues to produce entrepreneurs

As the fourth class of the Blair County Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) prepares for tonight's Investor Panel event at the Devorris Downtown Center, it does so with the realization that the ideas and concepts that led them to the program to begin with are coming to fruition.

"The students understand that all the information that has been provided by people in the business world and all the direction that has been reinforced by a terrific group of mentors has suddenly come together," emphasized Matt Stuckey of Stuckey Automotive, one of YEA!'s three instructors. "They're ready to strut their stuff."

The 26-week YEA! experience is heading into the final stages where class members will be putting the final touches on their businesses, each with a valuable financial assist from a panel of impressive investors.

"We've been impressed with this program from the first time we saw it," remarked John Brown, President of Hoss's Steak & Sea House, which has invested in all four classes. "As we look at the future of our local business community, it is young people like these with creative ideas that will keep us moving forward."

Prior to the Investor Panel event, the YEA! class had an opportunity to meet and interact with a group of CEO's. Needless to say, they were quite impressed.



The CEO Roundtable panel for the Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy event consisted of, left to right: Pat Baechle of Baechle Architects, Karen Wyland of Mamie's Cafe and Bakery, Todd Lewis of Shoe Fly Stores, Julie Potter of Tame Your Mane and Sam McCloskey of S. J. McCloskey Builders.

"It was amazing!"

That was the response from Young Entrepreneurs Academy student Hugh Newman when YEA! class members were asked their opinions at the January 28th CEO Roundtable session, held at the Altoona Launch Box.

Newman and his fifteen classmates had access to a panel of Blair County CEO's who provided an overview of their own entrepreneurial experiences and then met with

class members in small groups.

The panel consisted of Pat Baechle of Baechle Architects, Todd Lewis of Shoe Fly Stores, Sam McCloskey of S.J. McCloskey Builders, Julie Potter of Tame Your Mane, and Karen Wyland of Mamie's Cafe and Bakery.

"An incredible group of accomplished business people," acknowledged YEA! Program Manager Royce Boyd. "Their experi-

ences helped put things in perspective for our class members. A lot of concerns that they've had about developing not only strategies but the right frame of mind have pretty much disappeared. This was eye-opening."

Class member Quinn Garrity agreed.

"So much of what we heard from the panelists was about the importance of being accountable and looking for opportunities that don't always present

themselves automatically," he admitted.

Classmate Zach Manna was impressed by the amount of emphasis that the panelists put on creating business relationships.

"These people have grown their businesses by learning from other people but also in connecting with others in as many ways as possible," Manna pointed out. "You need to reach out."

To people in the community as well. That realiza-

tion struck a chord with class member Josh Holsopple.

"All of the panelists emphasized how important service to the community is," he noted. "Volunteerism is a big priority for them. Your reputation as a business is often what separates you from your competition. Serving your community can be a way to build that reputation."

The YEA! Class will complete its requirements with a trade show in late April, followed by a graduation ceremony on April 28th.

"It's been an eventful year," Boyd stated. "This class has been engaged from the very beginning and their business ideas have been sound. They really want to be successful and they understand that success involves commitment. I look forward to seeing where they go with what they've learned."

Despite the fact that the 2020 YEA! Class still has several weeks to go, recruitment for the 2021 Class has already begun. Any student currently in a Blair County school in grades 5-11 can submit an application to be part of that next class. Simply visit yeausa.org.

"As the program continues to gain prominence, we'll have students applying all year long," Boyd admitted. "We look forward to interviewing them and starting them off as our next entrepreneurs."

(For more information on the YEA! program contact the Chamber at 814-943-8151 or go to YEAUSA.org.)

Williamson has Blair Senior Services thriving

Steve Williamson has worked at Blair Senior Services in Altoona for half his life. He's also made it a point to understand the senior market well enough to know what it takes to be successful. The 50-year-old Williamson has helped the agency to become one of the most efficient in the state. An avid hunter and fisherman, he holds a Bachelor's Degree in Human Resources and a Master's in Labor Relations. Steve and his wife Amy have a son Gavin who is preparing to attend graduate school.

The Chamber: What would people in Blair County be surprised to know about Blair Senior Services?

Steve: Based on benchmarks established by the PA Department of Aging, for five consecutive years, Blair Senior Services has been the highest serving Area Agency on Aging in the state in terms of our ability to reach older adults. We are routinely able to reach and serve older adults at about 2.4 – 3.8 times the statewide average, depending on the age cohort. The other thing people would be surprised to know is that we do some limited work outside of Blair County.

The Chamber: What would people in Blair County be surprised to know about Steve Williamson?

Steve: While I work in a social service organization, my education and experience are grounded in business, not social work.

The Chamber: As the senior population in Blair County continues to grow, so do many of the challenges that impact that population. What additional responsibilities does that place on you and your staff and what factors would make that situation

Chamber

Q&A

more manageable?

Steve: Our funding simply does not meet the need in the community. It has been relatively stagnant for a decade. The cost of doing business has continued to increase and the population of older adults continues to increase. So, it is not a matter of trying to meet all of the needs. It is a matter of driving resources to the greatest need, while knowing you will leave other needs unmet. From a practical standpoint, I'm not sure the funding can keep up with the need. When you look at the costs and the demographics, it comes down to trying to make the most of what you have to work with and getting the priorities right. Additional funding would help make the situation more manageable, but aside from that, volunteers help us serve many more people than we ever could based on our funding. Quite simply, we need more volunteers.

The Chamber: What have been the good and bad changes in your industry since the time you became the person in charge at Blair Senior Services?

Steve: On the good side of the equation, the aging system is slowly moving towards more data and outcomes driven service provision. It allows folks to see where money is spent and what the impact is. Hopefully that will have a positive impact on service provision, priority



Steve Williamson, President of Blair Senior Services, has worked at the organization for 25 years.

setting and funding decisions.

On the not so great side of the equation, we work in an environment that is not built to get the most out of people or resources. It is not innovative or creative, it is not good at problem solving, the pace of change can be painfully slow, it

offers little incentive to do better and is fraught with more rules and regulations than most reasonable people would believe possible. Sometimes it's just downright frustrating. If we are not careful, it will cause people to leave the system or, worse yet, become apathetic. That said, I

still get to go to work every day with an opportunity to make a difference in someone's life, and I get to do it with a group of people I enjoy working with and a highly supportive Board of Directors. This is what I chose to do.

The Chamber: Who are your personal and professional role models and why?

Steve: My grandfather is my personal role model. He is genuine, thoughtful, caring and an all-around great human being. If I can be half the person he has been, I'll be doing just fine. Professionally, it's not a single person. It's really 2 groups of people. I have the opportunity to work with a great group every day and I learn from them on an ongoing basis. As I mentioned, my background is not in social services, so these folks bring information, ideas and perspectives to the table that are not necessarily natural to me. I also have access to a host of peers in the Aging professional association. It's a tight-knit group that shares thoughts, ideas, etc. on an ongoing basis.

The Chamber: What is still on Steve Williamson's "bucket list"?

Steve: I've been very fortunate to be able to travel to hunt and fish, far beyond what I ever thought I would be able. I had something of a bucket list that I was fortunate enough to be able to complete. That said, hunting mountain goats in British Columbia or Alaska and catching a marlin are two things I would still love to do, especially if I was able to do them with my son. Short of that, I'd be quite content to spend some time out west tromping around in the mountains with my family.

Barnhart to receive Business Excellence Award

Mark Barnhart, owner and chairman of NPC, Inc. will be the eighteenth recipient of the Blair County Chamber's Lifetime Achievement Award for Business Excellence. Barnhart will receive the award at the Chamber's Business Excellence Dinner, set for June 22nd at The Casino at Lakemont Park.

The Lifetime Achievement Award honors an individual who, during the course of at least twenty-five years, has been regarded as a business leader in the region and who has positively impacted the Blair County business community. The awardee must be a member of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce, should have some involvement, past or present, with the Chamber and be regarded as a strong corporate citizen.

Barnhart is a former Chamber board member and is currently a member of the Chamber's Executive Roundtable. He has also been an integral



Mark Barnhart

part of the Chamber's Early Childhood effort, even convening meetings to discuss ways to mobilize the business community to assist in creating awareness of the county's future workforce.

"We are delighted to welcome Mark Barnhart to the impressive list of past recipients of this award," acknowledged Chamber Board Chair Darin Tornatore. "He and NPC have been key elements of our county's success story and he has been especially gracious with his time and resources."



The Highmark/Chamber Golf Classic is one of the earliest outings each year. It's also one of the most popular.

Highmark/Chamber Golf Classic May 4

One of area's most eagerly-anticipated networking events will tee-off on May 4th.

The Annual Highmark/Chamber Golf Classic returns to Iron Masters Country Club to what is traditionally a full complement of golfers, non-golfers and business people eager to make some good contacts.

"The people who tell us that the golf course is an incredible place to do business really know what they're talking about," remarked Stacy Hoover, the Blair County Chamber's VP of Events and Technology. "Every year we hear stories about connections being made that result in some good opportunities."

As in the past, the Chamber event begins with a great pig roast lunch

from Holland Bros. Meats, sponsored by PSECU. That's followed by eighteen holes of golf in a scramble format with plenty of snacks and beverages. After the golf comes a picnic-style dinner while an impressive list of prizes are awarded.

"It's fun but it's also competitive," Hoover explained. "We generally attract some pretty good golfers." And some pretty bad ones too!

"Some just enjoy the day out of the office," she noted. "This might be the only event they play the entire spring and summer. So we do our best to make it memorable."

There are still a couple sponsorship opportunities available for businesses that "like to get their name out there." Besides Comfort

Carts, there are tee/green sponsorships as well.

And of course, the Classic is always looking for willing volunteers to cover the par-3's and help with registration.

"Without these volunteers, we'd really struggle to offer a high class event," Hoover pointed out. "They play a huge role in making the day go well."

Anyone who would like to sign-up to play should either call the Chamber at 943-8151 or complete the form on the Chamber website at www.blairchamber.com. Anyone who would like to volunteer at the Highmark/Chamber Golf Classic should contact the Chamber at the number listed in the previous sentence.



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It's Happening!

Chamber recognizes "All-Stars" for February

The Blair County Chamber's ability to offer quality programming, events, recognition and advocacy efforts depends largely on the willingness of sponsors to step up to help underwrite the costs associated those efforts. So at the end of each month, we publish a list of businesses or individuals who sponsored anything Chamber-related during the month. They have helped us to make a difference in the business community. All-Stars for February are: Holiday Pools & Spas, Keller Engineers, Inc., Merry Maids, Mountain Road Structures, PennCrest Bank, S&T Bank, Smithmyer Plumbing & Heating, UPMC Altoona, and Window World.

Chamber Board of Directors Approves Ten New Members

The Blair County Chamber Board of Directors met on February 20th and approved the following new members: Berry Solutions Group of Altoona, Better Homes and Gardens/Christine Benzel, Big J Truck Repair of Altoona, Burns Excavating of Altoona, Keller Williams Advantage Realty of State College, LT Machine of Tyrone, Park Security & Installations of Altoona, Spring Cove Container of Roaring Spring, Two 20 Studios of Hollidaysburg and Joseph A. Zolna of Altoona.

Baker, Seidel to Co-Chair Workplace Wellness Committee

Phyllis Baker of Blair Regional YMCA and Courtney Seidel of Stiffler, McGraw & Associates were approved by the Chamber's Board of Directors as co-chairs of the Chamber's Workplace Wellness Committee.

Lattanza-DePaolis added to Foundation Board

Jessica Lattanza-DePaolis was elected to the board of the Blair County Chamber Foundation. She replaces Cathy Harlow who resigned from the board in January. Lattanza-DePaolis is director of The Altoona Launch Box Supported by the Hite Family.

New Committee on Recruitment Seeking Members

The Chamber's Board of Directors has created a new committee that will be charged with determining new and better ways to recruit members to the organization. "The Board believes that we need to take a more formal approach to reaching non-members and helping them to understand the importance of the business community working more closely together," explained Chamber Board Chair Darin Tornatore. Any Chamber Member who would like to be part of this new committee should call Joe Hurd at (814) 943-8151 or email him at jhurd@blairchamber.com.

Make Your Reservations Now for the French Riviera Trip

The Chamber and Dream Vacations are partnering on a trip to the French Riviera from October 31st to November 8th. Since the trip is limited to just 35 people, it may be a good idea to make a decision soon, since the initial sign-up was brisk. The French Riviera Trip includes visits to Nice, St. Tropez, Monte Carlo, Cannes and Monaco. This is the ideal trip for anyone who just wants to relax under the most ideal conditions. If that sounds like you, contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151.

Canadian Rockies Trip a Great Summer Getaway!

If you missed the recent informational meeting on the

Chamber's trip to the Canadian Rockies and Glacier National Park, you missed a lot! The Chamber is partnering with Epic Journeys on the trip, which is offered through Collette from July 26th to August 1st. The trip, at \$3,699, includes airfare from Pittsburgh. Among the highlights (aside from Glacier National Park) are Calgary, Waterton Lakes National Park, Banff, Athabasca Glacier, Chateau Lake Louise and the famous "Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump." The tour features a drive along the incredible Icefields Parkway. Paralleling the Great Divide, this special roadway is home to some of the most dramatic vistas in all of North America. Tourists will have an opportunity to ride across a 1,000-foot thick glacier or walk on the Glacier Skywalk. If you'd like information on the trip, contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or contact Epic Journeys at 266-5070.

Congratulations . . .

. . . to Philip Freeman, who was recently named Chief Operating Officer of Reliance Bank. He had previously served the bank as Chief Financial Officer.

. . . to Aaron Craig, bridge inspection/structural field services director for P. Joseph Lehman, Inc. Consulting Engineers, who was named the 2019 recipient of the Annual Rainmaker Award. The honor is given to an individual within the firm who has gone the extra mile with clients while providing engineering excellence in all levels of service.

. . . to the Altoona law firm of Goldstein, Heslop, Steele, Clapper, Oswalt & Smith which was recognized at the recent Chamber Breakfast Club as the longest-standing Chamber Member. The firm joined in 1917 and is marking 103 years of membership in 2020.



Waiheke Island in New Zealand is just one of many beautiful sites on the Chamber's itinerary for next January's Australia/New Zealand trip.

Down Under First Chamber trip in 2021 will be to Australia, New Zealand

The Blair County Chamber will begin its 2021 travel schedule with a trip to Australia and New Zealand from January 19th to February 7th.

"Our longest trip ever in terms of days and distance," explained Chamber President Joe Hurd. "It's one that people have been asking for since we began offering trips. Many of the people who traveled with us to South Africa last year contacted us to let us know that this was where they wanted to go next. We try to be responsive."

The Chamber is working with Heritage Travel on this trip. Globus is the tour partner.

"We've had great success with both Heritage and Globus," Hurd acknowledged. "Their attention to detail is always spot-on."

The trip includes Australian stops in Melbourne, Cairns and

Sydney and New Zealand stops in Auckland, Matamata, Rotorua and Queenstown.

"The volume of things that people will have access to on this trip is incredible," according to Heritage Travel owner Rachel Gingrich. "From the Opera House in Sydney to the Great Barrier Reef, this is an opportunity for people who only expect to travel here once to get the full magnitude of the beauty and the excitement."

An informational meeting on this trip will be held on March 18th at 6 p.m. at the Devorris Center for Business Development.

Cindy Sullivan and Susan Gaines of Globus will be the presenters. There is no cost or obligation to attend but the Chamber asks that potential attendees register by calling (814) 943-8151.

Breakfast Club

Chamber announces programs for March, April

The upcoming Blair County Chamber "Breakfast Club" programs will focus on two major priorities — winning the battle against illegal drugs and winning the Eastern League Baseball Championship.

On March 12th, the Chamber once again partners with Operation Our Town to pay tribute to the many people who help in the effort to keep our neighborhoods safe and drug free. Among the highlights of this year's event will be the presentation of the 2020 Community Partnership Award to retiring Blair County District Attorney Richard Consiglio. Consiglio has spearheaded many of the investigations and drug sweeps that have resulted in hundreds of drug-related arrests.

Operation Our Town will also present numerous awards to local law enforcement officers who have made a positive difference in the OOT realm. Assistant District Attorney Peter Weeks will provide a Year in Review, pointing to the many accomplishments that



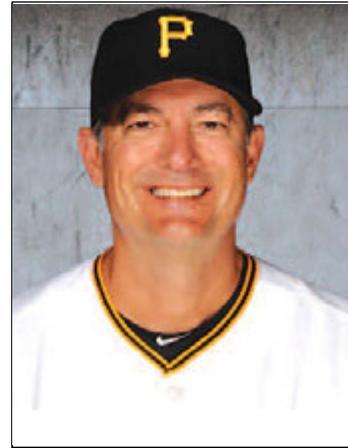
Richard Consiglio
District Attorney

took place in 2019.

Corporate sponsor of the March Breakfast Club is PSECU.

On April 9th, the Breakfast Club welcomes the new manager of the Altoona Curve as its featured speaker. Dave Turgeon becomes the eleventh manager in franchise history. This is his tenth season in the Pittsburgh Pirates organization.

The 54-year-old Turgeon is a native of New London,



Dave Turgeon
Altoona Curve Manager

Connecticut. In his presentation he will provide an overview of this year's Curve roster and answer questions from the audience.

The cost to attend either Breakfast Club is \$20 for Chamber Members and \$30 for non-members.

A breakfast buffet is included. To register, contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com.

Safety Committee programs to include Active Shooter, 911 Tour

The Safety Committee of the Blair County Chamber has scheduled two informative programs for late March and early April.

On March 27th at Hoss's Steak & Sea House in Duncansville the first is entitled, "Review of Strategies for Active Shooter Preparation and Best Practices Recommendations for Facility Safety." The presenter will be Bob Winters. Registration and a buffet breakfast begin at 7:30 a.m. The presentation is from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. The cost to attend is \$20 for Chamber Members and \$30 for non-mem-

bers. To register, contact the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com. Corporate sponsor is Keller Engineers.

On April 3rd, the program is a tour of the 911 Center beginning with a continental breakfast at 8:00 a.m. The tour begins between 8:15 and 8:30 at the Blair



Bob Winters

County Department of Emergency Services, located at 615 Fourth Street in Altoona. Attendees should travel down Sixth Avenue and park in the Saint Mark's Church parking lot, then walk to the main gate to enter the facility.

The program will include an overview of 911 operations. The cost to attend is also \$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. Sponsor of the tour is Sheetz, Inc.

Off The Cuff



Brad Krater



1. Describe Krater Services to someone unfamiliar with it? Krater Services provides installation, service and maintenance of residential, commercial and industrial electrical systems. We also provide service and installation of telecommunications work and installation of blown cellulose insulation. We have been in business since 2007. We provide quality service at a reasonable price. We treat our customers as we would want to be treated.

2. What would people in Blair County be surprised to know about your business? We perform jobs of most any size — residential, commercial and industrial. While we complete large projects, like a new retail store location or refurbishment of an apartment building, we also perform small jobs, like the repair of a receptacle, switch or light in your home.

3. What, in your mind, separates Krater Services from the competition? We put the customer first, we treat our customers how we would want to be treated. We provide free estimates for new work and stand behind the prices given. We strive to only hire people that we would want working in our home. Our employees are like family to us, you can trust them to provide you with quality electrical work that you can trust. We warranty our work for one year. We provide 24-hour emergency service. Krater Services is a name you can trust in Blair County!

4. How has your business changed most dramatically over the past ten years? We have grown in the type of projects we have done over the years. We have developed a great customer base over the last 13 years, and have appreciated working with many of the same general contractors over these last 13 years. We also have continuity with our staff. We have a core of experienced staff that have been with us since we established our company thirteen years ago. We trust our staff completely, and our customers can too. We have two master electricians working for us, and combined, our electricians have dozens of years of experience working in the electrical field. We have also added new quality young technicians to our existing staff that we train to provide the same great quality electrical work that people have come to expect from Krater Services.

5. What is Krater's vision for the future? Our vision is to continue to provide trustworthy, quality service at a reasonable price while staying on top of the ongoing changes in technology. We strive to be the business people call in Blair County to meet their electrical and insulation needs for many years to come in Blair County!



25
YEARS

It's scholarship time!

By JODI CESSNA

The Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation (CPCF) is the result of the dedication and vision of several community minded residents. Originally called the Greater Altoona Blair County Community Endowment, the foundation became a 501(c) 3 on March 24, 1995. In 1996, six funds were established bringing its total assets to \$39,000. Five more funds were added the following year and the asset level grew to \$352,000.

Several new funds, including the Gospel Hill Flag Fund, were created in 1998. The first scholarship, Ardie J. Dillen Memorial Scholarship, was awarded in 1998 to Matthew Langguth.

The year 2000 marked several significant firsts including the first corporate endowment by the McLanahan Corporation, the first Philanthropy Award was presented to T. Dean Lower, and the first Fellow was awarded to Jane Kazmaier Lower. Assets under management reached the \$1,000,000 milestone by the end of 2000 and the first competitive grants were awarded. The Altoona Foundation became part of the community endowment in 2001, adding over \$1,000,000 in assets.

By 2002, the foundation reached \$2,000,000 in assets under management. Significant change came in 2003 when the foundation

changed its name to the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation and established its own office space. At the close of 2003, CPCF had \$3,000,000 in assets under management.

From 2007 – 2012, total assets under management grew from \$5,000,000 to \$11,000,000. At that same time, the total distribution via grants and scholarships were in excess of \$1.2 million. The foundation has continued to grow into its third decade. In 2015, the Nason Foundation hired the CPCF to administer their Foundation. In 2016, a \$3.4 million gift, the largest to date, was received and resulted in over \$20,000,000 in assets under management.

Proudly, the foundation presented its 20th Philanthropy Award in 2019. By the end of 2019, CPCF had \$23.7 million in assets and had awarded \$18.2 million in grants and scholarships. Many of the individuals present at inception are still active with the CPCF today.

With the passion and dedication of the board and staff, the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation is excited about its next 25 years. For more information about the community foundation, visit www.centralpagives.org.

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



The Chamber's Leadership Blair County Youth program has helped area students to gain a better understanding of the concept of "servant leadership."

Application deadline approaching for 2021 Leadership Youth Class

Freshmen students from Blair County schools have until April 20th to apply for the opportunity to be part of the 2021 Leadership Blair County Youth Class. The students participate in the yearlong program during their sophomore year.

"It's a program, similar to LBC Adult, which has grown steadily through the years and has become competitive within the selection process," explained Judy Juda, the Chamber's VP of Programming and Membership Education. "It's important that interested students begin now to get the application process underway."

That process starts by securing an application at the student's school guidance office or

Applicants for the 2021 Leadership Blair County Youth Class can apply to be a part of the program until April 20th.

by downloading an application from the Chamber website at www.blairchamber.com. Then there's the matter of having forms of recommendation completed by non-family members. These forms help the selection committee to distinguish between applicants. Once those things are done, the student

needs to submit the application prior to the deadline.

"It's also important," Juda noted, "for the student and his/her parents to watch the video on the Chamber Website that explains the program in greater depth. Sometimes students apply without much knowledge of what the program is all about and they get disillusioned quickly."

One thing that LBC Youth applicants must guarantee up front is that they will make themselves available for the program's two-day retreat. This year, that retreat will be held on July 27 and 28.

For further information on LBC Youth, contact Judy Juda at (814) 943-8151 or email her at jjuda@blairchamber.com.

Looking to adopt a pet?
Check the community page every Sunday for shelter listings

Chamber's Young Professionals to hold CEO panel discussion

Why should young professionals in Blair County commit to living and working in the county for the long haul?

That will be the basis of a panel discussion hosted by the Young Professionals of Blair County on April 2nd beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the Devorris Downtown Center in Altoona. The panel discussion is expected to last 45-60 minutes and will be followed by a networking reception featuring light hors d'oeuvres.

The panel consists of Ann Benzel of Benzel's Bretzel Bakery, Andrea Cohen of Blair Companies, Jim Kilmartin of Pinnacle Cleaning and Joshua House, and Matt Stuckey of Stuckey Automotive. Moderating the panel discussion will be Steve McKnight, President/CEO of Altoona-Blair County Development Corporation.

"Many young professionals see Blair County as a great place to live but are concerned about opportunities for career growth," acknowledged Jessica Fisher of McQuaide Blasko Law Firm, who chairs the YP Committee. "It's important for us to hear from some business leaders who have a broader perspective on where those opportunities are."

The cost to attend the panel discussion is \$15/person. To register, contact the Blair County Chamber at (814) 943-



Ann Benzel



Andrea Cohen



Jim Kilmartin



Matt Stuckey

8151 or register online at
www.blairchamber.com.

Corporate sponsor of the event
is CNB Bank.

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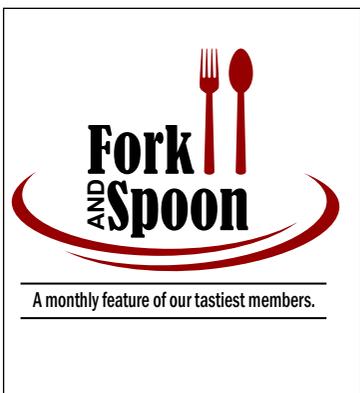
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Altoona Mirror

Making It Happen For You

Brooklyn Deli a haven for New York style food

Even though Blair County has its share of restaurants that feature pizza, strombolis, steak and Italian subs and a variety of specialty salads, Adam Bowser was convinced that he could grab a share of the market by doing things just a little differently.



When he purchased Brooklyn Deli in Duncansville, Adam and his wife Haley decided that the concept of New York-style food might be enough of a niche to attract a loyal customer base. Turns out, he was right. Brooklyn Deli has become a destination for people who appreciate a menu with a clever combination of creativity and diversity.

“People seem to understand that we’re willing to put everything on the table to succeed,” Adam pointed out. “We’re seeing more and more repeat customers who aren’t afraid to provide feedback on what they like and what we can do better. That’s made a positive difference.”

For a relatively small business, Brooklyn Deli has big aspirations. The Bowser’s are excited about the prospect of growing the business in years to come. They know, however, that growth needs



Adam Bowser, owner of Brooklyn Deli in Duncansville, has successfully brought genuine New York-style food to Blair County.

to be managed through attention to detail.

“In this business, there’s a right way and a wrong way to do things,” Adam explained. “I’ve been paying close attention to the way that our products are served. By that I mean that the accuracy and consistency of the product

need to stay the same no matter who is making it.”

While Adam concentrates on the product, Haley handles the marketing and advertising aspects of Brooklyn Deli.

“She plays a big role in our operation,” Adam acknowledges. “She has a good feel for how to get our message

out in the most effective ways. Too often, businesses like ours assume that word-of-mouth alone will incentivize people to come and try our products. Haley knows better.”

Brooklyn Deli is located at 2906, Rte. 764 in Duncansville. They can be reached at

(814) 696-7827 and the menu is online.

(Fork & Spoon is a new restaurant feature which highlights Chamber-member businesses each month. Brooklyn Deli has been a Chamber member since 2017.)

Altoona Symphony, Fort Roberdeau on list

Tourism Marketing Grant Partnership Presentation

BY EXPLORE ALTOONA

Over the course of the Blair County Tourism Marketing Grants Partnership's thirteen-year history, a total in excess of \$310,000 has been awarded to 18 different non-profit organizations. This year's partnership covers a vast variety of campaigns and projects including consumer shows; digital plat-



forms; broadcast commercials; marketing statistical research and others.

The two newest Blair County experiences featured within the awards, which exude the authentic variety which represents our sense of place, include the September 11th National Memorial Trail, an evolving network of off-road multi-use trails, greenways and scenic roads that link the September 11th National Memorial in NYC, the Pentagon Memorial in DC, and the Flight 93 National Memorial in Somerset County, and Hoopsfest, the largest, outdoor 3-on-3 basketball tournament in PA. Hoopsfest is organized by



File photo

Altoona Symphony Orchestra director Teresa Cheung takes a bow after a performance.

Joshua House and received its first tourism marketing grants partnership this year.

Ten worthy marketing projects were awarded a total of nearly \$32,000 during the annual Tourism Marketing Grants Partnership presentation on March 5, 2020 which was held at Joshua House in Tyrone.

The purpose of the program is to offer financial assistance for the anticipated result of enhancing the

leisure destination marketing efforts, outside the immediate marketing trade area, of the County's non-profit tourism related assets and attractions. The goal is to generate increased overnight stays at the County's lodging properties, therefore, contributing to the \$358 million in travel spending which benefits the Blair County business community and supports more than 2,750 full-time, part-time, and seasonal jobs.

This annual financial investment offers a unique opportunity to each one of the recipient organizations for various marketing projects and campaigns it would not otherwise be able to afford; collectively, these marketing initiatives produce overnight stays, thus actually contributing to the generation of the very revenue from which it benefits, hotel tax.

Grants committee members include Ann Benzel, Benzel's Bretzel Bakery; Jodi Cessna, Central PA Community Foundation; Jane Sheffield, Allegheny Ridge Corporation; and Jennifer Fleck and Mark Ickes, Explore Altoona.

2020 Grant Recipients

A Quaint Corner Children's Museum	\$1,002.35
Allegheny Ridge Corporation	3,175.00
Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum	4,000.00
Altoona Symphony Orchestra	4,000.00
Blair County Arts Foundation	4,000.00
Blair County Historical Society	4,000.00
Fort Roberdeau	3,979.00
Joshua House	1,500.00
Rails to Trails of Central PA	2,171.60
Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art	4,000.00

Sutter continues to expand his impressive legacy

“A man of dignity and professionalism.”

That was how a local business leader described Dick Sutter when asked to identify some of the qualities that are no longer so evident within the current realm of polite society. At 82, Sutter would chuckle at that description. He would also be touched by it.

Dick Sutter made himself a ripe candidate for a Blair Business Mirror feature story at the Chamber Breakfast Club in February when his business, Richard C. Sutter & Associates, was recognized for being a member of the Blair County Chamber for the past 42-years. “My goal,” he told the gathering, “is to get to 50.”

His Chamber allegiance aside, Sutter’s story is one that should be held-up to every young person who believes that the key to



Dick Sutter has been a member of the Blair County Chamber for the past 42 years.

having a successful career starts by moving away. From his early

education at Baker Elementary School in Altoona to his 60-years

as a respected planner at the local, regional and state levels, Sutter found his passion and made it an asset to his community.

“A lot of good things have happened in my life that set my direction,” he pointed out. “I was introduced early to maps in the Boy Scouts and became more interested in them while in the army. In college at Penn State, a good friend’s father who was a long-serving mayor of a steel city near Pittsburgh indicated that opportunities existed in community planning that were very attractive. That piqued my interest to enter the field.”

After graduation, Sutter took a position with the Blair Regional and Altoona Planning Commission. He became a senior planner and was later appointed the Planning Director, a position

which he held for eight years. He founded his own firm in 1974.

“As far as milestones in my professional life, I am the longest serving member, since 1966, of the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Blair County for transportation. I’m a charter member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and have been a past member of the Rotary Club of Hollidaysburg for 35-years,” he noted. “It’s been quite satisfying.”

And it appears to be far from over.

“I expect to continue in my current role for the foreseeable future,” Sutter admitted.

“My older sister worked up to several days before passing at the age of 97. I have a way to go. Professionally, I would like to provide the means to implement the plans in which I participated in preparing. A legacy project, such as the def-

inition and restoration of the Kittanning Path (Trail) through Blair County is a project which I very much would like to undertake.

“Additionally, I would like to facilitate improvements and further development of a Boy Scout camp, from financing to project construction, in the name of my father — Frederick C. Sutter — who was a longstanding Boy Scout Commissioner.”

With so much to accomplish, Sutter seldom spends too much time back-tracking.

“I am the youngest of five siblings,” he noted. “I’m the last one left. So I’ll do what I can and I’ll keep moving forward. There are so many important things left to do.”

(Richard C. Sutter & Associates has been a member of the Blair County Chamber since 1978.)

Nominations invited for 13th edition of ‘20 Under 40’

The Mirror is accepting nominations for its 13th edition of 20 Under 40, which will recognize 20 deserving community members younger than 40 years old in the June edition of Blair Living.

Criteria for nomination include business success, entrepreneurial spirit and community service of those who have

contributed to the betterment of life in the region.

All three components are factored into the final selections.

Eligible for selection are people who either live or work in Blair County and who will not be 40 years old until after July 1.

Nominations submitted in past years should be updated to

include current information. “20 Under 40” is a joint venture between the Mirror and the Blair County Chamber of Commerce.

Nominations should include a brief letter in support of the nominee and contact information for the nominee and the person making the nomination.

Nominations preferably should come from non-family members. The deadline for nominations is April 10.

They should be sent to: Neil Rudel, Managing Editor, Altoona Mirror, 301 Cayuga Ave., Altoona, PA 16602 or emailed to nrudel@altoonamirror.com.



Perseverance helps Carlin & Associates to attract clients, expand services

As the successful coach of a local high school girls basketball team, Keith Saleme has a great understanding of how perseverance and dedication can make a difference against some formidable competition.

Two years ago, Saleme bought Carlin & Associates, a full-service commercial, personal, life, bonding and group medical agency located in Altoona. The agency represents numerous major insurance carriers, allowing it to service accounts of all sizes, despite having only seven employees.

"The agency was started by Phil Carlin in 1974 and had no clients," Saleme acknowledged. "As the result of having a great staff and an incredible



Keith Saleme (seated) purchased Carlin & Associates two years ago from Phil Carlin (standing) who started the business in 1974.

desire to serve the community, we have grown to be a multi-million dollar agency." Saleme gives the lion share of the credit to Carlin, who continues to stay active with the company.

"Phil's professional-

ism has made a huge difference in how people in the community view us," Saleme explained. "To become one of the largest Central PA-based independent agencies is not an easy

accomplishment."

He is determined to take the business to even loftier heights.

"We continue to work hard and look for opportunities," Saleme points out. "Our goal is to be the best in the industry."

He recognizes that his industry has become more complex and requires a constant emphasis on staying up-to-date.

"Increased sophistication among clients and insurers has been responsible for some pretty dramatic changes," he disclosed. "It's incumbent upon us to continue to operate in an efficient manner and our Agency Management System allows us to do that by electronically storing and accessing our files."

Saleme believes that another advantage to Carlin & Associates in

terms of staying current with industry and community trends has been its long history with the Blair County Chamber.

"We've been a member for more than thirty years," he noted. "It's helped us share in local business activities and get a greater sense of ways to make the community better. It's been an important way to stay apprised of political changes affecting our business. All of that is important."

(Carlin and Associates has been a member of the Blair County Chamber since 1985.)



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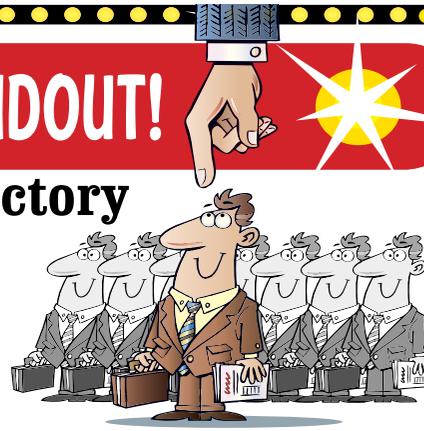
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Chris and Becki Hollen, owners of Lightning Bug Gift Company, have derived great satisfaction from being able to work side-by-side.

Working Together

Creativity, inspiration yield harmony for the Hollens

Getting out of work mode is a constant struggle for Becki and Chris Hollen, co-founders and designers at Lightning Bug Gift Company in Hollidaysburg.

“Even when we’re trying to relax, something work-related will come up and we’ll end-up talking about it,” Chris admitted. Becki readily acknowledged her culpability as well for failing to adequately separate work life from home life.

“In different ways, we’re always working on something,” she noted. “Even casually strolling through Instagram at night we’re finding new products that we want to carry or we’ll see a beautiful picture that gives us inspiration for something new to draw. Finding ways to be off-the-clock hasn’t worked so well for either one of us.”

It hasn’t affected the business. Lightning Bug Gift Company is doing just fine and is building a

strong reputation as an apparel and gift company with a focus on small batch and locally made goods which allow people to “show off your local and Pennsylvania pride.”

“We also carry goods in our store from regional and national artists and makers,” Becki pointed out. “Local t-shirts, which we design and print ourselves, hand-made jewelry, greeting cards and small batch coffee are just a few things you can find in the shop.”

Being able to work together has been an added bonus for the Hollens’.

“Building a business together is a really satisfying feeling,” according to Becki. “Being able to spend most of our days together, working side-by-side is also great.”

It creates significant harmony, Chris believes.

“We’ve been married for four years but have been together for sixteen and working together for

nine,” he disclosed. “We’ve both been into creating things since we were kids. So the fact that we can work creatively together is amazing.”

Running a business is challenging. Running two businesses is mind-boggling. Besides Lightning Bug Gift Company, the Hollens’ also operate Everyday Balloons Print Shop, which they opened in 2011. It’s created the essential need for above average organizational skills.

“We’re fairly organized, but if we weren’t, I’m not sure how we’d be able to run two businesses,” Becki disclosed. “During busy times, there are definitely things that get pushed to the back burner - like laundry. Eventually we get caught-up. We also have a lot of support from our families which we’re very thankful for.”

(Lightning Bug Gift Company has been a member of the Chamber since 2019.)

Chamber, Dale Carnegie Training offering Public Speaking Workshop

Speaking in public is often voted as the number one fear that people have. For business people who are often called-on to represent a business or promote a concept from the uncomfortable position of a podium, panic is never that far away.

To help people to gain a better sense of confidence while at the same time speaking with conviction, the Blair County Chamber and Dale Carnegie Training are teaming-up to offer a half-day workshop entitled, “Public Speaking Mastery.” The workshop will be held at The Casino at Lakemont Park on Tuesday, March 31st from 8:00 to 11:45 a.m.

The presenter of Public Speaking Mastery will be Dale Carnegie trainer Fred Vornbrock who will help attendees to understand their audience and their expectations, more effectively learn to research and organize presentations, use voice techniques and gestures for impact and use their own enthusiasm to capture attention.

“This topic is one that we have had numerous people suggest to us,” acknowledged Chamber President Joe Hurd. “It



Fred Vornbrock

speaks to the uncertain level of confidence that many business people seem to have, particularly at critical times. I’m certain that we’ll have an outstanding turnout due in large part to the outstanding reputation that Dale Carnegie has in helping people to overcome their fear of public speaking.”

The cost to attend the Public Speaking Mastery Workshop is \$49 for Chamber Members and \$59 for non-members. A buffet breakfast and all materials are included in the cost. To register, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com.



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Double Play: WE-LEaD Seminar a great two-for-one deal

The WE-LEaD Committee of the Blair County Chamber had two great ideas for a half-day seminar and couldn't decide which one to do. So they're doing both on April 30th at The Casino at Lakemont Park.

"We had two topics that were the most requested from business women," explained the Chamber's Judy Juda, who oversees the WE-LEaD program. "Our other piece of good fortune was that we had an outstanding presenter who knows both topics well. It made sense to give people twice the value."

That presenter is Dr. Sherry Cain, an expert in stress management and team building.

"We've had Dr. Cain as a presenter in the past and she's outstanding," Juda pointed out.

The seminar begins with a full buffet breakfast from 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. The first session, entitled, "From Burnt Out to On Fire" will run from 8:00 to 9:30 and will deal with how women can effectively deal with the often overwhelming struggles of managing



Dr. Sherry Cain

home life and work life. Following a 30-minute break, the second session, entitled "Don't Feed the Fears," addresses the strategies to use in eliminating the self-limiting beliefs that keep people from reaching their goals.

Event sponsor is Benzel's Bretzel Bakery. Session sponsors are Seltzer Financial Strategies and Blair Companies.

The cost to attend the WE-LEaD Seminar is \$55 for Chamber Members and \$65 for non-members. To register, call the Chamber at (814) 943-8151 or register online at www.blairchamber.com.

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