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**Joseph Albert, DO, MRO,
DOT Certified Medical Examiner
Medical Director**

Dr. Albert has over 20 years of comprehensive Occupational Healthcare experience. His experience in emergency department medicine is an asset to our team. Dr. Albert is a certified Medical Review Officer and a DOT Certified Medical Examiner.



**James Stephenson, MD, MRO,
DOT Certified Medical Examiner**

A skilled Board-Certified Occupational Health medical provider and surgeon, Dr. Stephenson has over 30 years of clinical health care experience. Dr. Stephenson is a certified Medical Review Officer and a DOT Certified Medical Examiner. An avid traveler, Dr. Stephenson also oversees the Travel Medicine Clinic at our occupational health clinic.



**Monica Kwan-Consigli, PA-C,
DOT Certified Medical Examiner**

Monica has been employed at Pottstown Hospital for over 20 years. During this time, she has been a dedicated medical provider for our Occupational Health Team and Pottstown Hospital's Employee Health Department. Monica's health care expertise in both departments is well respected.



**Theresa Cedzo PA-C,
MSA Health Care Administration,
DOT Certified Medical Examiner**

Theresa's 30 years of comprehensive Occupational Health Medical Provider and Occupational Health Clinic Management expertise is an asset to our team. Theresa also leads our ancillary clinic team.

For More Information: Kathleen Kelly O'Hara,
Client Service Coordinator 610-326-2300 ext. 5555

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Cover Story: *In business for over 50 years, Signature Sign, Inc. of Reading is a full-service sign company offering expert installation & service to meet all your signage needs with modern equipment and a commitment to quality and timely service.*



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School District Taxes
Expected to Rise
Almost Five Percent



24
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... AND MORE!

Published by: MACnificent Pages, P.O. Box 334, Pottstown PA 19464-0334

Subscribe online! www.422bizmag.com

Editor & Publisher – Bill Haley; Advertising Manager – Patti Seigel

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OVER 50 YEARS IN BUSINESS?

NOW THAT'S A GREAT SIGN!

By Kathy Hunt

Perhaps you've driven past a store and noticed that it has a gaudy or ugly sign with clashing colors, unevenly spaced letters, or, worse yet, a misspelled word. Although most business owners understand the importance of good signage, not everyone ends up with one. Why is an attractive sign important for a business? A sign performs a simple but essential job: Anyone who drives, rides, or walks by a well-crafted sign is reminded what that business offers and when its services or products can be obtained. A clear, appealing sign makes an impression on the public, promotes a business's brand, and serves as enduring, low-cost way to advertise.

Creating an effective sign involves more than scrawling your business's name in a storefront window or on a sandwich board. Fonts, logos, lighting, colors, and materials as well as dimensions, placement, and visibility all factor into a sign's memorability and success. Using a skilled and seasoned sign designer and manufacturer is key. That's where Signature Sign Inc. of Reading can help. In business for over 50 years, and with such national clients as Burger King, Dave & Busters, IHOP, and Texas Roadhouse and local and regional clients such as Reading Area Community College and Weiss Markets, Signature Sign possesses the experience and expertise to design, install, and service a plethora of signs.



PHOTOS BY STYLISH IMAGES

DENNY BOYER



All signs pointed to ...

Denny Boyer's history with signs dates back to high school, where he made his first commercial sign in woodshop. Comprised of six varnished letters, roughly three inches thick, it was installed by the front door of the Exeter Restaurant. Around the same time as this early success, Boyer's mechanical drawing teacher secretly submitted some of the student's drawings to the Delaware Valley Industrial Arts Fair. Boyer won first place there as well as at the Berks County Industrial Arts Fair, which was held at Albright College in Reading.

Boyer, who is the founder of Signature Sign Inc., said, "While I was standing at Albright College, looking at my drawings, a voice behind me said, 'Your drawings all work together. It's a complete set.' It turned out to be the chief draftsman at Gilbert Associates. He asked if I had any plans after high school and, if not, would I want to be a structural draftsman at Gilbert Associates. In 1964, I graduated high school on a Friday and started work at Gilbert Associates on Monday," he said.



In 1971, Boyer received a fateful phone call from his mother, who was at the Reading Fair — someone at the fair had a magnetic sign machine, a rarity during a time when most business owners' buildings and vehicles featured old fashioned, hand-lettered signs. Still interested in making signs, Boyer ended up buying the machine and placing it in the tenant house of his parents' "farmette." This would be his temporary

workspace until he moved his sign-making operations to a two-car garage in the Shillington area.

Machine installed and mastered, Boyer began visiting gas stations, lawn mower repair shops, and other small businesses, talking to the owners about his signs.

"I did this from 7 to 9 AM and then, I'd go to my day job," Boyer said. "After I was done at work, I would go to my parents,

make the signs, and deliver them the next morning. I'd also do hand-lettering," he said. "I was selling \$250 worth of signs each week for a few hours of work, and I wondered what I could do if I worked the whole week at signs. So, after a bit of deliberation and soul searching, I quit my job and worked by myself for six months before I ended up with too much work to do on my own. So, I hired Frankie May, who is also a professional bowler, to do hand-lettering and help me install."

Today, Signature Sign has eight employees, consisting of Boyer, an administrative assistant, a salesperson, a graphic designer, two fabricators, and two service installers. The business supports customers in Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and parts of Virginia. It is headquartered at 926 New Holland Road in Reading, in a 14,000-square-foot building that Boyer bought in 1986. The site is a stark contrast to the company's humble beginnings. It's also evidence of how resourceful and committed Boyer is to crafting quality, eye-catching products for his clients, traits that guarantee both new and repeat customers.

(Continued on page 8)

COVER STORY

(Continued from page 7)

The markings of a good sign

When considering the design of any sign, Boyer thinks about “eye appeal,” what will look visually enticing to the customer as well as to the public. He thinks about colors, including background and gradient colors, and fonts. Light-colored fonts perform well on dark backgrounds while dark-colored fonts work best on light backgrounds. Contrasting colors make a sign stand out and also are more readable.

The sign’s shape, architectural features, and reveals are equally important. Architectural features go above or below the sign and can include LED accents that will make the sign pop at night. Constructed from aluminum and formed into curves, bars, stripes, and other shapes, these add-on pieces draw additional attention to the business.

“It doesn’t make any sense to me to make a blah sign that doesn’t do anything for the customer,” Boyer said. He added that, if Signature Sign has the opportunity to design something from scratch, the staff makes sure that the resulting sign possesses eye appeal. “It’s not going to be the typical, old sign that you see out there.”

Where the sign will be displayed is another consideration. Signature Sign works with townships to ensure that the sign’s design will complement township regulations. “If there’s any doubt, we will call the township to get the square footage that’s allowed on the property and get the waivers and permits. We also

attend planning and board meetings and do everything from A, B, C, down to Z to make sure that everything is done right for the township or municipality that the sign will be in,” he said.

As a custom sign manufacturer, Signature Sign is UL-certified. The Underwriter Laboratories (UL) certification indicates that a service or product meets local and federal safety and environmental regulations, and that the manufacturer follows quality and safety standards.

Signature Sign is also a member of and supplier in Pennsylvania’s “COSTARS,” the Commonwealth’s cooperative purchasing program. According to the Pennsylvania government’s website, COSTAR businesses respond to bidding

opportunities on the COSTARS or PA eMarketplace website. A supplier that successfully responds to a contract solicitation may be awarded a contract.

What to expect when working with Signature Sign

The first step in working with Signature Sign is to schedule a consultation either by phone at 610.775.0851 or email at info@signaturesigninc.com. Customers can also stop by the business and speak to staff in person. If it’s more convenient for the customer, Boyer and the Signature Sign salesperson will travel to the customer’s site to discuss a sign project.

Whether a business owner has an existing logo or needs help coming up with one, Signature Sign’s graphic designer will work to create an image that suits the business’s intentions while enhancing its physical location. No business should have a sign that either detracts from or negatively attracts people to it.

“At the end of 2023, beginning of 2024, Brandywine Area High School sent me a drawing from another sign company and asked me to quote the job,” Boyer said. “I took one look at the drawing and called them to say that I appreciated the opportunity I was given to quote the job, but that I wasn’t going to quote it. When they asked why, I said, ‘I don’t like it and neither would you. This sign gives you

nothing that you’re looking for. Let me design a sign for free, and we’ll see where we go from there,” he said.

Boyer sat down with his graphic designer and, together, they designed a new sign. He then showed the sign to the high school officials. “And the sign’s up now and they love it to death,” he said.

In addition to eye appeal, elements such as structural design, wind load factors, and material durability are factored into the sign’s design. Just as you don’t want a sign that’s an eyesore, you don’t want a one that could fall over or off and injure passersby. Likewise, you want to be certain that what has been designed can be safely and legally installed.

Once a site survey has taken place, the Signature Sign team will submit a proposal that includes plot plans, building elevations, and photos of the site as it presently appears and images of how it will look once the sign has been installed. Scaled, detailed drawings will also be provided.

Signature Sign carries out the permitting process from start to finish. If variances are required, a staff member will research, prepare for, and attend the hearing. As Signature Sign’s website states: “From estimate, to permitting, to variance (if required), and site coordination, Signature Sign covers every aspect of the project. Excavation of foundations, cooperation with other site contractors, proper placement of foundations, handling of actual sign installation, to



PHOTOS BY STYLISH IMAGES





final electrical connection, the national sign forwarding company has only one contact to deal with. These are the reasons Signature Sign is repeatedly called upon to handle both routine and time-sensitive installations of national account signage."

Over a half-century of knowledge

Having been active in the sign business for over 53 years, Boyer has accumulated a tremendous amount of insight and know-how about what does and doesn't work with signage.

"Since I started, there have been so many technical changes, from fluorescent and neon to LEDs," he said. "You very rarely see neon or hand-lettered signs anymore. And we have had ups and downs with the economy. One thing has stayed the same — I'm interested in satisfying the customer and telling the customer what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. Because they don't buy signs very often, customers may not know much about signs. I'm not going to pull the wool

over their eyes. They need to be educated about signs, and I'm going to be honest with them," he said.

He stated that, after all these years, there are few situations or problems that he hasn't witnessed or can't solve. "There are no problems. There are only solutions," he said. "For every problem, there is always a solution. When guys

have problems in the field, they'll call me. I'll ask them questions, get information, and give them answers about how to solve the problem. The people who work for me respect my knowledge in the business."

Boyer not only has the expertise but also owns the commercial equipment to carry out service and installation calls.

The business has two service trucks that go up 40 feet, one that goes up 58 feet and another that extends 82 feet. If a service person needs to disconnect and take down a sign, Boyer has access to a crane and a lift. From putting up and taking down signs to changing LED lights and replacing power supplies, Signature Sign does it all.



Signature Sign Inc.

For additional information about Signature Sign Inc., or to schedule an estimate or service appointment, call 610.775.0851 or email info@signaturesigninc.com, and visit <https://signaturesigninc.com/>



Gary Vickrey Joins Herbein to Form Leadership Division

Award-winning CPA advisory firm Herbein + Company, Inc. recently announced that **Gary Vickrey**, a nationally recognized leadership development and business transition expert, has joined the firm to lead its newest leadership division.

“Gary and his team have a stellar reputation for driving transformative change and fostering growth in both individuals and organizations,” said Herbein CEO Dave Stonesifer. “With a deep understanding of leadership dynamics, Gary brings invaluable expertise in executive coaching, conflict management, succession planning, and talent management to our firm, as we continue to drive success for our clients.”

With extensive experience advising family-owned businesses and major corporations in various industries, Vickrey brings a diverse perspective to Herbein. While he specializes in the selection and development of senior leaders throughout the world, his most recent area of focus is in constructing and implementing Leadership Development Academies for leading organizations.

Vickrey also is actively involved in executive coaching and development, conflict management, rewards and recognition, and public speaking.

Joining Vickrey at Herbein are **Mackey Smith** as VP of Talent & Strategy Consulting, and **Stacy Vickrey** as Manager of Assessments and Logistics.

For additional information on Gary Vickrey and his team, please visit www.herbein.com.

About Herbein + Company, Inc. (Herbein): Herbein + Company, Inc. (Herbein) is an award-winning CPA advisory firm, creating impact nationally and locally since 1972. We build value through exceptional service and innovative solutions, and provide client-focused accounting, tax, advisory, HR consulting, wealth management, and risk management services. Our clients benefit from tailored strategies in the communities where they live and work that help them succeed with confidence, today and tomorrow.

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Visit www.herbein.com or connect with us on LinkedIn, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter).



Fromm’s Enduring Legacy and Vision for the Future

In 2023, Fromm marked a major milestone: 100 years in business. Founded by Alexander Fromm in 1923, the company has grown from a small storefront with four employees into a leading electrical supply and services firm in the Mid-Atlantic, headquartered in Reading, with nine branches and over 120 employees. Through three generations of family ownership, Fromm has remained committed to its core values: an unwavering dedication to customer experience, in-depth knowledge of the electrical industry, and a commitment to giving back to the local community.

As Fromm looks to the future, the company is launching a new division called FrommConnect. This exciting initiative represents a significant departure from Fromm’s traditional distribution business, and is designed to provide a range of engineering, fabrication, and labor-saving services to its customers. FrommConnect was born out of the need to help customers navigate the challenges of a competitive business

environment, where the skills and knowledge of retiring employees can be difficult to replace.

Where Fromm currently supplies electrical materials and equipment, FrommConnect will offer a menu of services including control panel fabrication and assembly, fixture pre-wiring, training, software programming, automation system design, and technical troubleshooting. By providing these value-added services, FrommConnect will help customers streamline their operations, improve efficiency, and stay ahead of the curve.

As Fromm embarks on this exciting new chapter, the company remains committed to its customers throughout eastern Pennsylvania. With FrommConnect, the company is poised to meet the evolving needs of the marketplace, while continuing to deliver the exceptional service and expertise that have defined Fromm for a century.

For additional information, please call 610.323.1555 and visit www.fromm.com.

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Please visit our website Berkswatertech.com or give us a call at 610.670.7275 to discuss your water treatment needs.



Phil & Debbie Goshert

Rothenberger Insurance Services Recognized at Greater Reading Chamber Alliance Annual Awards Dinner

Rothenberger Insurance Services (RIS) has once again proven its commitment to excellence, earning recognition at the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) Annual Awards Dinner. This event, which honors the region's top businesses, recognized RIS in Category 1 of their Business Excellence Awards.

RIS has long been dedicated to providing top-notch insurance solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of their clients. Their team, known for their expertise and customer-focused approach, has played a pivotal role in this achievement. The recognition at the GRCA Awards is a testament to their hard work and dedication to the clients they serve.

The GRCA Annual Awards Dinner not only celebrates business success but also highlights the importance of community and collaboration. RIS is proud to be part of a business community that supports each other. This recognition reinforces their position as a leader in the insurance industry, continually setting the standard for quality and service.

Whether you're safeguarding your home, your health, or your business, remember that with Rothenberger Insurance Services, you're not just insuring your assets, you're entrusting them to a team that cares about your well-being. For additional information, please call 610.685.2804 or visit www.risquote.com.



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Lezzer Lumber *Building Pennsylvania Together*

For 97 years, Lezzer Lumber has been serving the Pennsylvania building industry through its business dealings and dedication to community support. With the opening of their 11th location in Reading in 2022, Lezzer Lumber extended their reach into Berks, Chester, Montgomery, and Bucks Counties.

At Lezzer Lumber's Reading store, located at 3171 Morgantown Road in Mohnton, quality is not just a promise but a guarantee. From cabinets to countertops, decking to flooring, each product is carefully curated to meet the highest standards. But it's not just about the materials — it's about the people. Lezzer's team of experts is dedicated to guiding customers through every stage of their home projects, from initial quotes to final delivery, ensuring a seamless experience from start to finish.

As Lezzer Lumber looks towards the future, its commitment to excellence remains strong. With a century of experience under their belt, they continue to innovate and adapt to meet the evolving needs of their customers. Whether it's



investing in their product offerings or expanding into new markets, Lezzer Lumber stays at the forefront of the industry, ensuring that customers have access to the best service and products available.

Stop in at Lezzer Lumber's Reading store today and experience the difference of working with a family-owned company and a team of expert staff who care. Whether you're embarking on a small renovation or a major construction project, Lezzer Lumber stands ready to be your trusted partner every step of the way.

For additional information, please call 610.856.1600 and visit www.lezzer.com.

Security Service Company

With the protection afforded by Security Service Company (SSC), home and business owners have assurance that, no matter what event takes place, they and their possessions will be safeguarded. Based at 110 West Arch Street, Suite 200, in Fleetwood, Berks County, the family-owned Security Service Company installs and supports commercial, residential, and personal security systems across southeastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey.

When it comes to protecting clients, SSC emphasizes "total security." This entails designing a system that meets each customer's individual needs, installing that system, and monitoring and responding to any alarm triggers. The company provides rapid, 24/7 responses to such scenarios as an intruder, smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detection, as well as medical emergencies.

SSC offers free, in-person consultations for anyone interested in a security or fire alarm system.

For those interested in business or home surveillance, SSC will install camera systems with video verification as



well as low-light and long-term recording. Along with notifying customers when someone arrives at or trespasses on their property, SSC's camera systems enable them to view images of people, vehicles and license plates from their phones, computers, or television screens. Depending on the system selected, notifications arrive through a phone app, text message, email and other means.

For additional information about the residential and commercial services offered by Security Service Company (SSC), contact the company at 1.800.232.2500 or email: info@SSCsince73.com, and for additional information, please visit www.securityservicecompany.com. On-site consultations are free and coordinated to meet the customer's schedule and needs.

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At Berks Leisure Living, You're Family

Berks Leisure Living, located at 1399 Fairview Drive in Leesport, Berks County, is situated on ten lush acres. The one-story, brick building first opened its doors in 1931 to the students of Bern Elementary School. In 1998, the school was sold and underwent extensive renovations before opening in 2002 as Berks Leisure Living. The facility's unique location inspired its tagline, "We're from the old school." Today, the 36,000-square-foot assisted living facility has 36 private and semi-private units with 41 residents. It is licensed to have up to 49 occupants. Residents range in age from 70 to 90 and above, but, at present, one person under the age of 60 calls Berks Leisure Living home.



Ray Miller

Berks Leisure Living has a straightforward mission "to improve the quality of life for residents and their families," said Ray Miller, founder of and partner in Berks Leisure Living. "We provide personal care with a personal touch. We're like family. We're here to help."

Berks Leisure Living provides residents with three nutritious meals each day, all prepared in the facility's commercial kitchen and made with consideration of

dietary restrictions. It has personal laundry service and cleaning and housekeeping. It offers medication management, transportation to and from appointments, in-house podiatry and psychiatry visits, and help with bathing, dressing, hygiene, eating, and mobility. All rooms are wheelchair accessible and cable-ready. Residents pay a monthly fee for private cable TV. All rooms come fully furnished. However, residents who wish to bring their own furniture will be accommodated.

Life at Berks Leisure Living includes more than just health and personal care. Entertainment and lifestyle amenities likewise play a large role in resident's lives. Community outings, bingo, exercise classes, and nondenominational religious services are all part of an active lifestyle at Berks Leisure Living. Additionally, for the residents' convenience, the facility has a hair salon on site.

For additional information about Berks Leisure Living, visit www.berksleisure.com or call 610.916.8833 from Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Berks Leisure Living is located at 1399 Fairview Drive in Leesport, Pennsylvania.

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FOCUS ON SUCCESSFUL BERKS COUNTY BUSINESSES

Muhlenberg Greene Architects Firm Associate Joins Reading HARB

Suzanne Cody, Director of Business Development, is appointed to the Historical Architectural Review Board

Muhlenberg Greene Architects is pleased to announce that Suzanne Cody has been appointed to the City of Reading Historical Architectural Review Board for a 5-year term.

Suzanne Cody has over 20 years' experience in marketing and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Interior Design, from Moore College of Art and Design. She translates the firm's strategic goals into effective public relations, marketing, and communication efforts to increase awareness and understanding of MGA's capabilities.

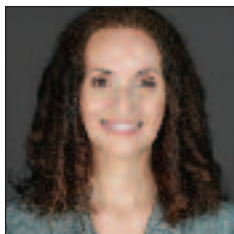
The Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) is an advisory citizen group composed of volunteer professionals and residents committed to preserving historic architectural features and structures within the historic and conservation districts of Reading.

Composed of 9 members appointed by the City Council, Suzanne will fill the role

as a trades professional who has knowledge of or interest in the preservation of historic buildings and districts.

As a community collaborator, Ms. Cody has produced events centered around history and architecture with the Berks History Center, the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce, Berks Alliance, BCTV, Muhlenberg Township, and the Commercial and Industrial Council of the Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS®. In her position on HARB, she aspires to bring visibility to the organization's mission and articulate the value in historic preservation.

Suzanne is an active member of the community, serving as Board Secretary on the Foundation for the Reading Pagoda, and as the Board Secretary and Membership Chair for SMPS Central PA. Additionally, she runs the annual Help A Girl Out grassroots effort to combat period poverty in Berks County, held each year during February.



Suzanne Cody,
Firm Associate,
Muhlenberg Greene
Architects

Celebrating a century of business in the county, the staff at MG Architects have developed strong ties to the local community, including serving on a variety of Boards and other volunteer roles. Congratulations, Suzanne.

About Muhlenberg Greene Architects, Ltd.: Since 1920, Muhlenberg Greene Architects, Ltd. has built a reputation for thoughtful design, detailed project documentation, and quality service for our clients. Our history traces the development of Berks County, with timeless designs including Stokesay Castle and the Medical Arts Building. Today, our legacy continues as a partner building the future of Berks County. We help our area businesses, nonprofits, and educational clients bring new and adaptive reuse projects to life.

Learn more at MG-Architects.com.

About the City of Reading Historical Architectural Review Board: The Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) is an advisory citizen group composed of volunteer professionals and residents committed to preserving historic architectural features and structures within the historic and conservation districts of Reading. The HARB exercises the functions, duties, responsibilities, and activities set forth in the City of Reading Historic and Conservation Districts Ordinance.

For more information visit Readingpa.gov/historical-architectural-review-board-harb



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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT



Dolan Construction Inc. is thrilled to announce that they have taken first place in the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance Business Excellence Awards for 2024. This recognition stands as a testament to the unwavering commitment and dedication of the entire Dolan Construction team. The honor reflects the culmination of years of hard work, strategic planning, and an unyielding focus on delivering excellence in every project. The Dolans express their heartfelt gratitude to their talented team and loyal customers, whose trust and collaboration have been pivotal in this remarkable achievement.

The Dolan Construction team, a group of highly skilled and passionate professionals and craftspeople, has always prioritized quality, safety, and customer satisfaction. Each member brings unique expertise and a shared commitment to the company's core values, creating a synergy that drives success. This award is not just a reflection of the Dolans' leadership but also a celebration of the team's collective effort. From project managers to on-site workers, every individual's contribution has been integral to reaching this milestone.

One of the key factors behind Dolan Construction's success is their strong repeat customer base. Patrick and Maureen Dolan, owners, have fostered relationships built on trust, reliability, and exceptional service. Their customers know that they can count on Dolan Construction to deliver projects on time, within budget, and to the highest standards of quality. This loyalty is a testament to the company's consistent performance and dedication to meeting and exceeding customer expectations. The company's culture of continuous improvement and investment in their people ensures that they remain at the forefront of the construction industry.



As Dolan Construction looks to the future, the company remains committed to maintaining the high standards that have earned them this esteemed recognition. Everyone at Dolan Construction is excited about the opportunities ahead and is confident that their team will continue to deliver exceptional results. The first-place award from the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance is not just a celebration of past achievements but a promise of continued excellence and growth.

The honor from the GRCA Business Excellence Award for 2024 serves as a milestone in Dolan Construction's journey of success and excellence. Patrick and Maureen Dolan express their deepest gratitude to everyone who has been a part of this journey and look forward to many more years of shared success.



► For more information about Dolan Construction, call 610.372.4664, email info@dolanconstructioninc.com or visit dolanconstructioninc.com



The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance Welcomes New Director of Advocacy, Promotes Two Staff



Alex Roché

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) recently announced several key promotions and a new hire, underscoring our commitment to growth and excellence in delivering programming and services to its members and the Greater Reading business community. GRCA is pleased to welcome Alex Roché as their new Director of Advocacy, where he will lead GRCA's legislative agenda, advocacy initiatives, and strategy, and keep our members and community stakeholders informed on regulatory changes and community matters.

"After years working in non-profit and doing research with Downtown Colorado, Inc., I continued to realize the importance of the community's impact on the economic vitality and development of a region. I am excited to come home to Reading and work with the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance as we work together to ensure that the community is the center of the continued development of the Greater Reading region," Roché said.

Most recently, Roche served as a Strategy and Project Consultant at Sustainable Misfits where he developed its programmatic framework and long-term organizational goals. Before that, he managed the adult nutrition education team in Reading and Philadelphia as a Project Manager for The Food Trust.

"Alex will bring incredible energy, communication and analytical abilities that will be invaluable to our team. We are so excited to have him," said Lucine Sihelnik, President and CEO, GRCA.



Jackie Stiles

Additionally, Jackie Stiles has been promoted to Vice President of Business Development/Special Programs where she will oversee training, GRCA membership, events and leading Women2Women and the Family Business Alliance.



Aaron Gantz

Aaron Gantz has been named Vice President of Economic Development & Strategy where she will be responsible for spearheading GRCA's economic development initiatives and strategic planning efforts.

"Both Aaron and Jackie possess the knowledge and ability of a growth mindset to support all of us at GRCA into what the future holds for our organization," Sihelnik said.

ABOUT THE GREATER READING CHAMBER ALLIANCE: Our mission is with excellent and committed leadership and coordination, we: attract new businesses to our community, support the businesses that are already here, nurture local start-ups, develop the workforce for today and the future, and advocate on behalf of the business community.

Morgan Truck Body Expands its Presence in North America

Morgan Truck Body, LLC acquired Transit Truck Bodies Inc. (Les Fourgons Transit Inc.), a well-established manufacturer of truck bodies in Laval, Quebec, Canada. The acquisition of Transit increases the total number of Morgan Truck Body locations to 14 manufacturing facilities in North America. Founded in 1978, award-winning Transit Truck Bodies has been mastering the craft of truck body manufacturing for over forty-five years, with Louis Leclair leading as Transit's president. Transit Truck Bodies is headquartered in Laval, Quebec, and includes a product line of cutaway, dry freight, refrigerated, and tailor-made solutions.

"With Transit's workforce, known for quality and efficiency, and an expandable 120,000+ square foot manufacturing facility in the heart of Quebec, Morgan Truck Body looks forward to meeting growing customer needs with quality products for North American markets," said Tom Diez, Chief Commercial Officer of Morgan Truck Body. (See page 20 for more on Morgan)

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SureStay Plus by Best Western Reading North Grand Opening

SureStay Plus by Best Western Reading North held a Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on June 20th at 2200 Stacey Drive, Reading, PA 19605 (at intersection of Route 12 and North 5th St. Hwy.) The event included speeches and ribbon cutting, a door prize (free night stay) drawing, and other raffle prizes drawings. There were representatives from Both The Rudden Family Foundation and The Salvation Army had a successful day of fundraising.

SureStay Plus by Best Western Reading North, formally known as Comfort Inn, Reading recently changed their brand name & franchise association. They offer clean & comfortable guestrooms at budget pricing, with wonderfully friendly service, plus a fresh & hot breakfast buffet.

Vijay Joshi, Owner, spoke to staff, friends & family of SureStay Plus by Best Western Reading north, political figures, and local business people, explaining his enthusiasm about working with Best Western and giving praise for the staff's hard work and dedication.

Additional speakers included: Senator Schwank, Mayor Moran, Jackie Stiles of GRCA, Gary Seibert of SBRA, and Ed Puodziunas of Best Western. (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance & Small Business Resource Association.)



There were music performances by Lucile Jazz Vocalist, Tom Montgomery on Keys & Roger D Harris with guitar.



For additional information, please contact Janet Lamborn, GM, SureStay Plus by Best Western Reading North, 2200 Stacey Drive, Reading PA 19605. Hotel

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CELEBRATING EYE INJURY PREVENTION MONTH

Ensuring Eye Safety: A Commitment from Wyomissing Optometric Center

At Wyomissing Optometric Center, safeguarding your eye health is our top priority. We understand the alarming statistics surrounding preventable eye injuries and are dedicated to empowering you with proactive measures and specialized care to preserve your vision.

Common Eye Injury Sources and Types

Eye injuries can occur unexpectedly across various settings. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), approximately 2,000 U.S. workers sustain job-related eye injuries daily that require medical treatment. These injuries encompass a range of scenarios, including blunt trauma from objects like tools or sports equipment, corneal abrasions caused by flying debris or contact lenses, chemical burns from industrial chemicals and radiation burns from UV exposure or welding activities. In 2022, 3.6 million people were treated in emergency departments for injuries involving sports and recreational equipment.

Potential Consequences of Eye Injuries

The consequences of eye injuries can be severe and life-altering. They often necessitate immediate medical attention to prevent infection, repair fractured orbital bones, or mitigate the risk of permanent vision loss. For instance, blunt trauma can lead to orbital fractures requiring delicate surgical intervention, while chemical

exposures demand swift treatment to minimize tissue damage and potential blindness. Pain, scarring and decreased quality of life are typical consequences of unprotected eye related injuries.

Proactive Measures for Eye Safety

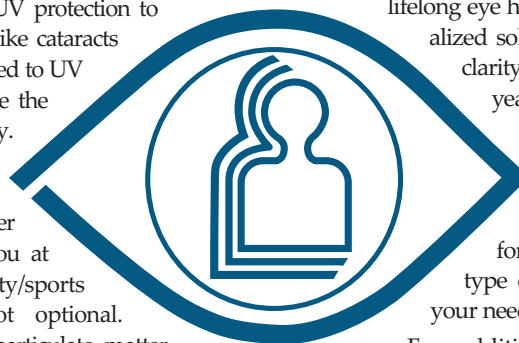
Prevention is the cornerstone of our approach to eye care. Wyomissing Optometric Center advocates for the use of ANSI-certified safety eyewear in workplaces and recreational activities where eye hazards are prevalent. Our options include protective glasses and goggles designed to withstand impact, shield against chemical splashes and filter harmful UV rays. For outdoor enthusiasts, we recommend sunglasses with UV protection to reduce the risk of conditions like cataracts and macular degeneration linked to UV exposure. Never underestimate the potential risk for an eye injury. Simple tasks like mowing the lawn, hammering a nail, spray painting and being a bystander near risky activity can put you at risk. Wearing protective/safety/sports eyewear is mandatory, not optional. Protective eyewear prevents particulate matter from reaching the eye and will deflect high speed objects from causing a penetrating eye injury. Special attention needs to be paid to our children when participating in

sports. Most sports pose a threat to the eyes so proper sports glasses are an important piece of equipment to consider. Our practice offers specialized solutions tailored to every age group. For adults and young athletes, we provide sports goggles and protective eyewear to safeguard against sports-related injuries. Sports related eye injuries account for a significant portion of pediatric eye injuries annually.

Specialized Eye Care for Every Age

By integrating advanced preventive strategies with compassionate care, Wyomissing Optometric Center is committed to preserving your vision and promoting lifelong eye health. Trust us to deliver personalized solutions that prioritize safety and clarity for your eyes, today and in the years ahead. Our practice offers 24/7 emergency medical eye care for those occasions where "accidents happen". Please reach out to any of our doctors for professional guidance on what type of protective eyewear best suits your needs.

For additional information please visit wyo-opto.com or call our offices at (610) 374-3134 (Wyomissing), (610) 385-4333 (Douglassville), or (717) 866-1400 (Myerstown).



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Vision Resource Center of Berks County

A private, non-profit social service agency that was founded in 1929 by the Reading Lions Club, Vision Resource Center of Berks County continues to provide services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Formerly the Berks County Association for the Blind, Vision Resource Center of Berks County provides an environment where people can be a part of their community with equal opportunities to lead fulfilling lives.

Services provided include preschool vision screenings, sight loss support groups, individual counseling, social-

ization and recreational programs, educational programs, Spanish-speaking support services, intake appointments, transportation services, and a sheltered workshop program. VRC has a low vision store at their headquarters. The items in the low vision store are to make independence with a visual impairment easier for the person.

Vision Resource Center of Berks County is located at 2020 Hampden Blvd., Reading PA. For additional information, please call 610.375.8407 or visit www.vrcberks.org.

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Morgan Truck Body Team Member Appreciation Day 2024

Morgan Truck Body holds monthly engagement events across all sites. Some of the monthly themes include Taco Day, Easter Celebration, Donut Day, Welcome Spring, Mother's Day lunch, Memorial Day BBQ, Father's Day lunch. Every March, we celebrate a companywide Team Member Appreciation Day.

As part of the celebration, we provide lunch, team members gifts, and raffle prizes. These events are planned by project teams, made up of cross functional and multi-level team members.



Morgan Truck Body Skilled Welding Training Program

Rewarding High School Students with Pay, Classroom Credits and Job Offers



Morgan Truck Body's welding training program currently serves five area High Schools that send students to the company's headquarters in Morgantown to pursue a hands-on career in manufacturing. High School Seniors who attend Morgan Truck Body's hands-on, skilled welding training program get paid while earning High School credit for attending daily two-hour classes. Students benefit from a small classroom experience, with up to eight students per program session, lab instruction, training on welding equipment, and access to a Virtual Reality Welding Simulator. High School Seniors who are at least 17 years old can attend Morgan Truck Body's paid welding training program in either the Fall or Spring session.

Participants who are at least 18 years old may be offered employment at the end of the Fall session and earn \$23 per hour working part-time until graduation. Students who are offered employment after the Spring session can begin full-time work upon graduation at \$23 per hour and be eligible for partial college tuition reimbursement after working full-time for six months.

Interested schools can contact Julie Ubele at Morgan Truck Body at Julie.Ubele@morgancorp.com or call 610.286.2314.

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SHORT-FORM VIDEO SOCIAL CONTENT IN 2024



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS By Theresa Mintzer

In 2024, short-form videos should be an essential tool for your social media content.

They are favored by algorithms and people will stop their scroll to watch it. These videos last from about five to ninety seconds. Use these videos to grow your social accounts and brand awareness. The bonus is that you can do it right from your phone.

Here are some helpful ideas for short-form videos:

- Product Teasers
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Behind the Scenes
- User-Generated Content
- Educational Videos

Video content can help with customer service. If you walk a customer through a procedure that can confuse them, you'll have less phone calls for help. You also can manage the expectations of the

customer. This will quickly clear up any miscommunication.

A great way to grow your Instagram reach is to make Reels. These short video clips are a great way to communicate quick bits of information. Nervous about video? You can take a video of something else and do a voiceover. If you don't have a video, you can use Canva to make a video out of photos. This is a trick you can use for TikTok as well.

In conclusion, short-form videos are an important part of social media. The more that you use video as part of your content plan, the more visible you will become. Plus, it's a great way for customers to learn about you and your business so they will know, like, and trust you. Interested in learning how to use short-form video as part of a larger content strategy? I offer social media coaching.

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IS CHATGPT PLUS WORTH IT?



MARKETING TIPS

By Julie Huff, Copywriter, beMarketing

AI is a constantly changing field, and it can be difficult to parse out the differences between seemingly similar options. With OpenAI's release of GPT-4o to the free version of ChatGPT, many are asking: is ChatGPT Plus worth it?

Free Version: New Updates and Upgrades

The introduction of ChatGPT-4o brought significant improvements for free users. Previously, GPT 3.5 was the only option, but it had limitations like hallucinations and slow processing. The new 4o model, however, offers faster speeds and better reasoning. Free users now also have access to multimodal features, including speech interactions, vision capabilities, and web browsing, though Dall-E image generation remains exclusive to paid subscriptions.

Benefits of ChatGPT Plus

For AI power users, entrepreneurs, or just people who are using the platform all day, every day, the paid version has some significant advantages. With five times the

messaging capabilities, Plus subscribers can avoid hitting the daily limit on 4o and being forced to revert to the older 3.5 model. The paid version also includes Dall-E image generation and custom GPT creation, making it invaluable for entrepreneurs and data analysis. ChatGPT Plus also provides early access to new features and potential future releases like GPT-5.

Looking Ahead

Plus users will likely be the first to access GPT-5, expected before 2025, offering even greater capabilities and benefits over the free version.

So, is ChatGPT Plus worth it with these advanced features available for free? It depends on your needs. For early access to new features and enhanced capabilities, the paid version is a solid investment. Regardless, both versions allow users to harness AI for content creation and data insights effectively.

At beMarketing, we're passionate about AI and its potential to change the future of marketing. We're exploring new tech to enhance our strategies, whether you're a power user or just starting with new technology. Give us a call at 484.246.8504 or visit us at www.bemarketing.com to find out how we can help you take advantage of AI!



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PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL DISTRICT TAXES EXPECTED TO RISE ALMOST FIVE PERCENT



**By Anthony Hennen,
The Center Square**

School district property taxes are a major source of revenue for schools and a heavy burden on local residents in some places.

In the near future, they're expected to grow even more.

Recent years have seen them grow 2.4 percent-3.3 percent — but they're expected to grow by 4.8 percent and 4 percent in 2025 and 2026, according to an analysis from the Independent Fiscal Office.

In fiscal year 2022-23, school district property taxes totaled \$16.6 billion and are expected to rise by 3.2 percent to almost \$17.2 billion in 2023-24.

The increase in 2022-23 was the largest increase since 2018-2019, the IFO noted. A good chunk of that growth came from a citywide property reassessment in Philadelphia, which caused a 31 percent rise in assessed value of single-family homes.



By 2024-25, statewide school district property taxes will hit \$18 billion and \$18.7 billion in 2025-26, the IFO projected.

Previous IFO estimates expected the tax burden to grow, but its latest projections show a downward revision. In 2022, the office expected \$17.5 billion to be collected in 2023-24, but the latest estimate has it at \$17.2 billion.

However, as much as property tax collections have gone up, their overall share of funding schools has dropped in recent years. Instead, temporary federal aid from COVID-19 grew (\$3.5 billion in the last five years), as has state sources.

Local residents can carry significant burdens thanks to school property taxes. In some instances, homeowners will pay four times as much in taxes for schools as they will for all other local and county taxes.

Schools are also growing their unassigned money in their general fund balances. Unassigned funds grew by 61 percent from 2018-19 to 2022-23, jumping from \$1.9 billion to \$3.1 billion.



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Our mission is to be Berks County's leading unified resource for building a healthy, competitive business community. Our vision is to assist companies to retain, expand and grow their operations and employment and attract new businesses to berks County.

UPCOMING EVENTS

INTERMEDIATE EXCEL PM SESSION - JULY 2024

Four weeks on Tuesdays: July 2, 9, 16, and 23
Time: 2:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Please remember to bring your laptop!

Center for Business Excellence

49 Commerce Drive, Wyomissing PA 19610

\$300/person - GRCA Members; \$375/person - Future Chamber Members

http://GreaterReading.org

Contact: Mark Dolinski, Vice President Training and Professional Development

mdolinski@greaterreading.org

Register: https://greaterreadingchamber.chamber-master.com/eventregistration/register/11749

INTRO TO EXCEL - JULY 2024

Four weeks on Wednesdays:
July 3, 10, 17, and 24

Time: 8 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Shearer Technical

727 Penn Ave., West Reading, PA 19611

\$300/person - GRCA Members; \$375/person - Future Chamber Members

http://www.greaterreading.org

Contact: Mark Dolinski, Vice President Training and Professional Development

mdolinski@greaterreading.org

Register: https://greaterreadingchamber.chamber-master.com/eventregistration/register/11747

ADVANCED EXCEL - JULY 2024

Four weeks on Mondays: July 8, 15, 22, and 29
Time: 8 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Shearer Technical

727 Penn Ave., West Reading, PA 19611

\$300/person - Chamber Members; \$375/person - Not-Yet Chamber Members

http://GreaterReading.org

Contact: Mark Dolinski

mdolinski@greaterreading.org

Register: https://greaterreadingchamber.chamber-master.com/eventregistration/register/11746

INTERMEDIATE EXCEL - JULY 2024

Four weeks on Thursdays: July 11, 18, 25, and Aug. 1

Time: 8 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Shearer Technical Computer Consultants

727 Penn Ave., West Reading, PA 19611

\$300/person - GRCA Members; \$375/person - Future Chamber Members

http://GreaterReading.org

Contact: Mark Dolinski

mdolinski@greaterreading.org

Register: https://greaterreadingchamber.chamber-master.com/eventregistration/register/11748

ADVANCED EXCEL PM SESSION - JULY 2024

Four weeks on Thursdays: July 11, 18, 25, and Aug. 1

Time: 2:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Please remember to bring your laptop!

Center for Business Excellence

49 Commerce Drive, Wyomissing PA 19610

\$300/person - GRCA Members

\$375/person - Future Chamber Members

http://GreaterReading.org

Contact: Mark Dolinski, Vice President Training and Professional Development

mdolinski@greaterreading.org

Register: https://greaterreadingchamber.chamber-master.com/eventregistration/register/11750

NETWORKING@NIGHT - CHESTER PERFETTO (JULY 2024)

Thursday Jul 25, 2024

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM EDT

Chester Perfetto

40 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing

Free to GRCA Members

Contact: Katie Johnsen 610-898-7779

kjohnsen@greaterreading.org

Register: https://greaterreadingchamber.chamber-master.com/eventregistration/register/11587

INTRO TO EXCEL PM SESSION - JULY 2024

Four weeks on Tuesdays: July 30, Aug. 6, 13, and 20

Time: 2:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Center for Business Excellence

49 Commerce Drive, Wyomissing PA 19610

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Four weeks on Wednesdays: July 31, Aug. 7, 14, and 21

Time: 8 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

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REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP



MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- 101 Bill Smith, Blvd King of Prussia, PA 19406
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ADVOCACY: The Chamber works for your business interests and the future of small and large companies in Montgomery County. The Chamber works for business reforms and promotes legislative action on a county, state and federal level to ensure Montgomery County is an attractive place for businesses to prosper. **NETWORKING:** For business development, nothing can work better than the personal contacts developed through the Chamber. Chamber events offer nearly 40 events annually designed for you to meet and connect with other members. Events include monthly Business Builders, quarterly Lunch & Learns, quarterly Chamber Chats, Legislative Forums, and four Signature Events.

BENEFITS OF JOINING THE CHAMBER:

Advocacy | Networking | Grow Your Business | Referrals | Benefits Management
e-news | Website | Mailing Lists | Recognition... **BECOME A MEMBER A MEMBER**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit our website for details, updates or to register!
montgomerycountychamber.org

State Rep Luncheon – July 12, 2024

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Annual State Rep Luncheon

Hotel West & Main

MerryMead Farm Social Event – July 24, 2024

5:30pm-7:00pm

Chamber Chat – August 8, 2024

9:00am – 10:30am

Details coming soon.

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Our Mission: Leveraging the power of membership to provide valued membership services and proactive leadership for the tri-county region.

Our Vision: The tri-county area has a strong sense of place – quality of life, economic opportunity, and generations of leaders - to support the region's businesses and communities.

Follow us on:      **#WhyTCACC**
#tcaccbettertogether



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- Logo with an active link to your website, that can be accessed from clicking on the homepage banner **Value: \$100**
- Welcomed in a Social Media post on our platforms with details about your company **Value: \$100**
- Event credit **Value: \$35**
- Building relationships with fellow Members and growing your company **Value: Priceless**

PLUS - if you join by July 31st:

- Free Membership breakfast in September where you will be recognized
- \$25 waived administration fee
- Extra \$35 event credit
- Complimentary lunch with investors

Join an upcoming information session! Scan the QR Code to select a date to learn more and meet the Chamber team so we can get your Membership started! Email angela@tricountyareachamber.com or call 610.326.2900 with any questions.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Congratulations to the businesses listed below for becoming new TCACC Members!

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MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Happy anniversary to the following Members for their consecutive years of Chamber membership:

46+ Years
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Smale's Printery
Sawchuk's Garage, Inc.

40 Years
Martin Stone Quarries, Inc.
Reinhart & Co., CPA's
Tri County Area Federal Credit Union

35 Years
Global Advanced Metals

5 Years
Flagship Financial
Three Daughters Inn LLC

REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP

CHAMBER FAMILY PICNIC



Thursday, August 1st
4:30 PM - 7 PM
Boyerstown Area Community Park Pavilion
417 S. Madison St., Boyerstown, PA 17512
\$25 per person | Children under 8 are free

Dinner will be served at 5:30 PM and will include the following from Moyer's Catering:
Hamburgers & hot dogs, broasted chicken, potato & macaroni salads, baked beans, ring bologna & cheese, chips, soft drinks & water, desserts, and more!

For more details or to register, please call 610.326.2900, visit tricityareachamber.com, or email alice@tricityareachamber.com.
When registering, please include all names of those attending. We will accept all cash donations using the fun!



TRICOUNTY REACH 4TH ANNUAL REACH CONFERENCE

Thursday, September 26th
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
RiverCrest Golf Club & Preserve
\$150 per person - bring a friend!!



Dr. Jo-Ella Mogenman
President & CEO
Pharmaceutical Sales

Jan Coeneberger
Keynote Speaker

Dr. Rudha Pyatt
Chairman & CEO
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TRICOUNTY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

One last round to close out the season

2024 Golf Outing

Thursday, October 3rd
at
Bella Vista Golf Course

10:30 AM - Registration | 11:00 AM - Networking Lunch
12:00 PM - Shotgun Start | 4:30/5:00 PM - BBQ & Clambake Dinner

\$200 per Member Golfer | \$750 per Member Foursome
\$50 Member Dinner Only

18 holes of golf, golf cart, networking, lunch, dinner, refreshments and snacks, complimentary games, fun, cash prizes, and goodie bag.

Presenting Sponsor: **SCHULTZ technology**



For more details or to register, please call 610.326.2900, visit tricityareachamber.com, or email alice@tricityareachamber.com. Scan the QR code to go directly to the event page on our website. Sponsorship Opportunities are available.

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REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP

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The Phoenixville Regional Chamber of Commerce is an independent organization serving the business interests of Northern Chester, Western Montgomery and parts of Delaware Counties.

The Chamber's mission is to "advance the principles of free enterprise by providing the leadership which will enhance the economic climate of the region, address the priority needs of its members, and interact with other individuals and organizations for the overall benefit of the business community."

FIRST FRIDAY PHOENIXVILLE

Join us downtown every First Friday, 5:30pm – 8:30pm, May – December.

Each and every First Friday the 100 & 200 Blocks of Bridge Street are closed to vehicles, to give residents and visitors more space to shop, eat and enjoy Phoenixville. Shops and Restaurants extend into Bridge street, so visitors and residents can experience an open-air experience every First Friday.

There will be live musicians placed throughout the downtown on Bridge and Main Streets, and handmade craft/artist vendors in the Main and Bridge Street parking lot.

BUILD CONNECTIONS

– visit our events page to find events for networking and getting to know local businesses!



INTERESTED IN MEMBERSHIP? LEARN MORE:



REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP

PERKIOMEN VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

521 Main Street, Trappe, PA 19436 • 610.489.6660

• info@PVchamber.net • www.PVchamber.net



Welcome to the Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce!

For 65 years the Chamber has been the recognized voice & advocate for the business community. Creating opportunities for members to connect with business professionals, mentors, and potential customers, the Chamber helps members improve business and create a thriving community for themselves and their employees. We can help grow YOUR customer base in Collegeville, Trappe, Schwenksville, Upper Providence, Lower Frederick, Lower Providence, Perkiomen, Skippack, and Oaks. Visit www.PVchamber.net to view membership directory. To sign-up for E-news, send request to info@PVchamber.net. Follow the PV Chamber FaceBook Page @PerkValleyChamber.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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FEATURED EVENTS



Monthly events include Business Roundtable Luncheons, PV Men's HH. Join us for bi-monthly Membership Orientation, quarterly PV WIN events, and quarterly Non-Profit Meet & Greet...just to name a few!

October 7, 2024 – 3rd Annual Sporting Clays Tournament & Luncheon Lehigh Valley Sporting Clays

Not familiar with sporting clays? It's like golf with guns! Includes targets, cart fees, a loaner gun, ammo, expert instruction and lunch at Grumpy's BBQ. No experience needed! Open to all. Sponsorships available for members. Call or visit our website for details.



October 23, 2024 – PV Summit – Business Conference & Networking Event

Breakout sessions, exhibitor showcase, speed networking, luncheon and keynote speakers. Attend for the professional development, learn about local and County updates, showcase your business and grow your network. Early bird registration discounts in July.

Monthly events include Business Roundtable Luncheons, PV Men's HH. Join us for bi-monthly Membership Orientation, quarterly PV WIN events, and quarterly Non-Profit Meet & Greet...just to name a few!

REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP

SPRING-FORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

• P.O. Box 127, Royersford PA 19468 • 610.489.7200 • www.springfordchamber.com



The Spring-Ford Chamber of Commerce is a community-focused business advocate. We strive to help our member businesses grow while improving the community in which we all live and work.

The Chamber consists of local businesses whose main objective is to run a successful business. We are a great resource for members, not only because we offer the opportunity to network and brainstorm with fellow members, but also to have exposure to the local community, your customer, through our continued involvement in community events and charitable endeavors. Visit www.springfordchamber.com for Chamber Events, Press Releases, Online Newsletters and more!

SPRING-FORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BECOME A MEMBER

Connections | Teamwork | Community Service
Innovation | Economic Growth | Partnership

www.springfordchamber.com

Join the Spring-Ford Chamber of Commerce and become part of our thriving business community!

Are you looking to drive economic growth, connect with local businesses, and enhance your community impact? Look no further! The Spring-Ford Chamber is dedicated to supporting and fostering the success of businesses like yours.

As a member, you'll enjoy:

- Networking opportunities with fellow entrepreneurs and professionals
- Access to valuable resources and tools for business growth
- Participation in exclusive events and workshops
- Promotion of your business through our channels
- And much more!

Join us in our mission to drive progress and prosperity in our community. Reach out to info@springfordchamber.com for more information on membership benefits and how to join. Let's grow together!

JOIN US AT
LIMERICK COMMUNITY DAY

Vendors
Family Fun
Food Trucks

Saturday
10 August 2024
12pm-3pm

Limerick Community Park

VENDOR REGISTRATION **Contact Us 610-489-7200**

Join us for Limerick Community Day, a vibrant celebration packed with entertainment, delicious food trucks, exciting vendors, and fantastic opportunities for businesses to connect and support our community. It's a day filled with fun for all ages, fostering a sense of togetherness and community spirit. Don't miss out on this fantastic event where we come together to celebrate, engage, and make lasting memories! You can register and/or **sponsor** here <https://springfordchamber.com/our-events/limerick-community-day-69>.

SF
Business Connect

This event is a fantastic opportunity to gain insights, expand your professional network, and discover innovative ways to grow your business.

Venue: Sunshine Cafe
Date: Every Tuesday

Event Logistics:

- 8:00-8:30am- Networking
- 8:30-8:45am- Introductions
- 8:45-9:00am- Presentation
- 9:00-9:15am- Wrap up

Contact Us:
(610)-489-7200
sfchamberofcommerce@gmail.com

The Spring-Ford Chamber of Commerce is committed to driving economic growth, retaining and growing local businesses, and fostering relationships that will continue to enhance the progress and prosperity of our members and the community we serve. We are excited to share upcoming events!

The Spring-Ford Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to announce our brand-new initiative - Spring-Ford Chamber Business Connect! This event will be held every Tuesday at the Sunshine Café.

Woman IN NETWORKING

Friday, July 12th 2024
Friday, August 2nd 2024
Friday, September 6th 2024
Friday, October 4th 2024
Friday, November 1st, 2024
Friday, December 6th 2024

Limerick Township Building
646 W Bridge Pike, Limerick, PA 19369
8:30 AM - 9 AM

Join us for our Women in Networking events! Don't miss this valuable opportunity to connect with like-minded women, share experiences, and empower each other towards achieving harmony and success in both personal and professional endeavors. Our events, held primarily on the first Friday of every month, provide a supportive and inspiring environment for networking and collaboration. Mark your calendars and be part of a dynamic community of women driving positive change and growth!

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THE SBRA COMMUNITY

It's All About Being a GREAT Leader



By Gary Seibert, CEO,
Small Business Resource Association

Over my almost 60-years of being an entrepreneur, I have met hundreds, even thousands, of good business owners and entrepreneurs. Obviously, some were more successful than others. Some seemed to struggle while others walked with confidence and self-discipline. Some of the people I encountered were GREAT business owners and leaders. I was curious as to what made them a GREAT leader and set them apart from just being a good leader.

Dwight David Eisenhower, nicknamed IKE, was an American military officer and statesman who served as the 34th president of the United States from 1953 to 1961. During World War II, he was Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe and achieved the five-star rank as General of the Army. His ability to lead others and be an exceptional president of our Nation should be an inspiration to all of us. IKE lived from October 14, 1890 to March 28, 1969. He passed away at 78 leaving behind a legacy of Leadership that helped make America GREAT. Here is IKE's definition of a leader: "Leadership is the art of getting others to do something you want done because they want to do it."

There are many characteristics that are found in a GREAT leader and I would like to share some of those in this article. Please note that GREAT leaders are not just "born a leader." Effective leadership requires skills and discipline that must be learned and developed. Anyone can lead when they learn how to leverage their own strengths in the right environment. There are as many different ways to lead as there are people; and there are many types of leaders. Leadership skills can vary widely depending on the situation.

L Great leaders **Lead by example**—they know the way, go the way, and show the way to others.

E Great leaders **Encourage others** through Trust and Respect and showing that they truly care.

A Great leaders **Address the problem**—then provide a permanent solution.

D Great Leaders **Develop open and effective** lines of communication that motivate others.

E Great Leaders **Empower others** to take leadership roles, make decisions and solve problems.

R Great Leaders **Reinforce and follow** the Vision and Mission of the organization.

S Great Leaders **Stimulate working together** for a common good emphasizing TEAM.

H Great Leaders **Highlight team strengths**—not weaknesses or limitations.

I Great Leaders **Improve productivity** through problem solving and planning.

P Great Leaders are **Programed for excellence**—the job must be done right the first time.

Great Leaders focus on their strengths, not their limitations. They surround themselves with others that are equal to or better than themselves. These other people fill in the gap where the leader has limitations. The leader is humble and is not afraid to ask for help or advice. The leader leads by example.

Great leaders understand the difference between their ability to get the job done and their ability to INFLUENCE OTHERS to get the job done.

James C. Hunter describes leadership as "the skill of influencing people to enthusiastically work towards goals — identified as being for the common good — with character that inspires confidence."

Leadership is a natural social process in response to a personal/group need. We did not invent leadership. Study the characteristics of many animal groups like ants, bees, geese, fox and elephants and you will see leadership at its best - a leader with followers and everyone having roles and responsibilities. Leaders respond to a cause, circumstances and a need for change. For example, we have a leader that takes charge in a disaster, a leader on a sports team, a leader in business and leader when there is fear of something. We also have leaders that step in when there is a need for change such as Martin Luther King.

There are different types of business leaders and, if you look closely at most businesses, you will find three distinct leadership roles in collaboration. The first is the Visionary/Creative leader who is responsible for the vision and mission of the business, he/she is the driving force behind the business. Next you will find a Managerial leader that is responsible for the followers (workers) in the business. The third type of leader is a Technical leader who makes sure all the I's are dotted and the t's are crossed. This group makes up the Leadership Team.

There are lots of good leaders out there but good is not necessarily good enough if you want to build a GREAT successful and profitable business. Think big, learn from other highly successful business owners as to how they have grown from good to GREAT and apply that skill in your business. It is all about LEADERSHIP and you are responsible for being a GREAT leader if you really want to be successful.



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HOW TO NAVIGATE A SMALL BUSINESS LOAN



By Anthony Pomponio, Chief Lending Officer, Riverfront Federal Credit Union

Navigating the small business loan: Obtaining a small business loan is often critical for small businesses to grow,

manage cash flow, or invest in new opportunities. Here is a simple guide to obtaining a small business loan:

1. Assess Your Business Needs

Before applying for a loan, it's essential to understand why you need the loan and how much you require. Common reasons include:

- **Working Capital:** To cover daily operational expenses.
- **Expansion:** To open a new location or purchase additional inventory.
- **Equipment:** To buy new machinery or technology.
- **Debt Consolidation:** To manage and consolidate existing debts.

2. Understand the Types of Loans Available

There are various loan options available, each with its own set of terms and conditions:

- **Term Loans:** These are traditional loans where you receive a lump sum of money upfront and repay it over a fixed period with interest. They can be short-term (less than a year) or long-term (1-10 years or more).
- **SBA Loans:** These are loans guaranteed by the Small Business Administration, which reduces the risk for lenders. They often come with higher rates.
- **Lines of Credit:** This is a flexible financing option that allows you to borrow up to a certain limit and pay interest only on the amount you use. Often rates are variable tied to an index such as the Prime Rate.
- **Invoice Financing:** This allows you to borrow against your outstanding invoices, providing immediate cash flow.
- **Equipment Financing:** These loans are specifically for purchasing business equipment and use the equipment itself as collateral. Rates and terms are usually fixed.
- **Business Credit Cards:** Similar to a personal credit card and can be used for start-ups to build credit.
- **Microloans:** Smaller loans typically offered by nonprofit organizations and community lenders, often with more flexible lending criteria. Small businesses may utilize this type of loan to build credit.

3. Prepare Your Documentation

Lenders require detailed information about your business to assess your creditworthiness. Common documents include:

- **Business Plan:** Outlines your business model, market analysis, and financial projections.
- **Financial Statements:** Includes income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow statements for the past few years.
- **Tax Returns:** Personal and business tax returns for the past few years.
- **Bank Statements:** Recent bank statements to show cash flow and account balances.
- **Legal Documents:** Business licenses, incorporation documents, leases, and any contracts related to your business.
- **Credit Report:** Both personal and business credit reports. Ensure they are accurate and address any discrepancies.

4. Determine Your Eligibility

Lenders look at various factors to determine your eligibility for a loan:

- **Credit Score:** A higher credit score improves your chances of getting approved. Aim for a score of 640 or higher.
- **Business History:** Lenders prefer businesses with a track record of at least 2 years, though some options are available for startups.
- **Revenue:** Demonstrating consistent revenue and profitability increases your chances of approval.
- **Collateral:** Some loans require collateral, which could be business assets, personal assets, or equipment.

5. Choose the Right Lender

Various types of lenders offer small business loans, each with its own advantages and disadvantages:

- **Traditional Banks:** Typically have stricter eligibility requirements and longer approval processes. There is no "ceiling" on rates. For example, credit card interest rates may be 20% or higher.
- **Credit Unions:** May offer lower rates and more personalized services. Rates cannot exceed 18% and are typically lower than a traditional bank interest rate. Additionally, credit unions are community focused and partner with small businesses within a geographic area.
- **Online Lenders:** Provide faster approval and funding times, but often at higher interest rates.
- **SBA-Approved Lenders:** Specialize in SBA loans, which can be beneficial if you qualify for these government-backed loans.

6. Apply for the Loan

Once you've selected a lender, complete the application process. This typically involves:

- **Filling Out the Application Form:** Provide detailed information about your business and yourself.
- **Submitting Required Documentation:** Upload or provide copies of the necessary documents.
- **Waiting for Approval:** The approval time can vary from a few days with online lenders and credit unions to several weeks with traditional banks and SBA loans.

7. Review and Accept the Loan Terms

If approved, carefully review the loan terms, including:

- **Interest Rate:** Ensure you understand whether it's fixed or variable.
- **Repayment Schedule:** Know how much you need to repay each month and the duration of the loan.
- **Fees:** Be aware of any origination fees, prepayment penalties, or other charges.
- **Credit Unions do not charge fees if a loan is paid off earlier; whereas traditional banks may charge a fee.**

8. Use the Funds Wisely

Once you receive the loan, use the funds as planned. Keep accurate records of how the loan is spent and maintain regular communication with your lender, especially if you encounter any difficulties in repayment.

Conclusion

Securing a loan for your small business requires careful preparation and understanding of your options. By assessing your needs, preparing thorough documentation, and choosing the right lender, you can increase your chances of obtaining the necessary funds to grow and sustain your business.

SBRA Monthly Member Shout Out

Members Helping Each Other Grow



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www.OwensSellsHomes.com



www.sottosantilawnare.net



ushagent.com/evanmarkwood

SBRA EVENTS

Events: Register at
<https://www.sbrassociation.com/#EVENTS>

SBRA Breakfast Referral Club

- Friday, July 19th – 7:30-9:00 a.m.
at B2 Bistro in West Reading

Networking Mingle

- Wednesday, July 31st – 5:30-7:00
at B2 Bistro in West Reading

Zoom - Membership Benefits Update

- Wednesday, July 31st – 9:00-9:30 a.m. –
Learn How the SBRA Can Help Your Business Grow

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Ask SCORE

OPPORTUNITIES AROUND FOR SHARPENING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS SKILLS

Very few people begin the process of building a small business with a full knowledge of all the skills required for success. Even those who have extensive experience or education in business management still need to bring themselves up to speed on the added responsibilities of entrepreneurship — tax issues, employee management, business development, accounting, etc.

Fortunately, the range of small business-oriented learning opportunities and training programs has never been broader for veteran and novice entrepreneurs alike. Seeking help is simply smart. No business owner can be adept at every aspect of operating successfully. Plus, conditions change, so keeping yourself informed is vital to long-term success.

The single most popular program in America is probably the SBA Small Business Training Network/E-Business Institute, which registers nearly a million users at its Web site each year. The Small Business Training Network is a Web-based conglomerate that can link you to online courses, workshops, publications, learning tools, information resources and access to electronic counseling and other types of technical help. For details on the Small Business Training Network, go to www.sba.gov and click "Training" under the site's Services section.

Free online courses are offered on about 75 topics in areas such as business startup, growing your business, home-based business and re-engineering your skills. Sample titles include:

Growth Strategies; Analyzing Profitability; Building Your Brand; and, Understanding Business Insurance.

The Tools section of www.sba.gov gives you access to an extensive library of articles, podcasts, and Web chats on various small business issues.

Local SBA-sponsored training events are offered nationwide. These range from breakfast talks on local economic conditions, to brown-bag networking lunches, loan seminars, startup workshops and free business assessments. Simply go the Local Resources section of www.sba.gov and click your state on the Web site map for a calendar listing dates and event details in your area. You can also sign up for free newsletters issued by your state SBA office.

In addition, dozens of top colleges and universities offer business training courses you can take online or in more traditional classroom environments. Most require a fee, and some may have educational prerequisites. Advisors at the individual schools will help you identify one or more courses that are best suited to your needs.

To learn more about training opportunities your small business, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business." SCORE is a nonprofit organization of more than 10,500 volunteer business counselors who provide free, confidential business counseling and training workshops to small business owners. Call 610.327.2673 for the Pottstown SCORE chapter or find a counselor online at www.score.org/tricounty.



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"SUCCESS THINKING" — IT'S ALL ABOUT ATTITUDE

As a small business owner, you're not just "the boss." You're also the leader, the person employees, vendors, customers, and prospects look to for guidance, support, and confidence. And being a leader is easier than you think. It begins with a positive, "can-do" attitude that your business delivers what it promises, and can achieve any goal.

This is called "success thinking," and it's found across all successful enterprises because the entrepreneurs made it contagious among their teams. They emphasize long-term potential over short-term thinking. They learn to innovate rather than hesitate, and shun the status quo as they seek to spark new interest and enthusiasm inside the business.

When you focus on the collective success of your business as a whole—not an individual person, project or product—you can accelerate success by identifying a few profitable activities and making them happen ever more flawlessly and quickly.

One way to spread success thinking is by encouraging communication across your team. Generally, those around you need more information in order to feel successful. Let them know where you think the business needs to go, the problems it faces and what keeps you up at night. Ask their advice about what you are doing right, what hurts and what needs fixing. That way, everyone has a bigger stake in your success. What's more they become more inspired to find new, better ways of doing things as well.



Positive thinking breeds confidence, which should always be encouraged. But don't become blinded by it. Writing in American Express's OPEN Forum, entrepreneurial consultant and author Mike Michalowicz says small businesses often set goals, then fail to adjust them when the dynamics of the environment change because they see their thinking as infallible.

"Being positive isn't a bad thing, it is simply being overdone," Michalowicz notes. "Being negative isn't bad either; its value is just being ignored. So start getting a little more negative in business. It will positively help you."

To learn more success-minded ideas for your small business, contact SCORE "Mentors to America's Small Business." SCORE is a nonprofit organization of more than 12,000 volunteers who provide free, confidential business mentoring and training workshops to small business owners. To find the SCORE chapter nearest you or to chat with a mentor online, visit www.score.org.

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Ask SCORE

SOME INSIGHTS ON SUCCESSFUL OUTSOURCING

Outsourcing is a common practice in today's business world, but it's not the domain of large companies. Small business owners use outsourcing for a variety of reasons — to handle work overflows, receive specific expertise in a new or unfamiliar area such as marketing or IT, or take on more routine administrative tasks that are taking up too much of their time and attention.

The decision to outsource certain functions requires a professional approach, particularly since the small business owner may be understandably leery about relinquishing control over a task that he or she has handled from the outset. Developing a successful long-term relationship with an outsourcing partner requires effort on both sides. It's important to treat it like a partnership, because that's what it really is. A vendor who supplies a vital service for your business is like part of your staff, so you should go through a similar interviewing and reference checking process before you "hire" them.

Using outside service providers who have experience working with your particular type of business is important. You'll also want someone with the technology and expertise to deliver cutting edge services.

Be sure to ask detailed questions about the service you will receive and your access to someone who can answer questions and solve problems as they arise. For most small business owners, this kind of accessibility and service are

top priorities. If the firm you are considering won't be available when something goes wrong, look elsewhere.

Also ask your candidate firms for current and past clients who received services of a scope similar to what you're looking for. If possible, ask for clients similar to yours to properly gauge how well the company understands your needs. And, always meet with the service provider's leadership as well as the people who will be working directly with you. You don't want to have any doubts about their ability to handle what may be critical tasks for your business.

The "go-to" resource for help is the Outsourcing Institute, the world's largest professional community dedicated solely to outsourcing. The Institute's Web site (www.outsourcing.com), provides a wealth of information about outsourcing trends, articles on securing IT and business processing services, and tips for ensuring your outsourcing partner delivers the level of performance you want.

To learn more about outsourcing successfully, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business." SCORE is a nonprofit organization of more than 10,500 volunteer business counselors who provide free, confidential business counseling and training workshops to small business owners. Call 610.327.2673 for the Pottstown SCORE chapter, or find a counselor online at www.score.org/tricounty.



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NEW FEDERAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES — CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY UPDATES



LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

By Christopher Rothermel, Esq., Wolf, Baldwin & Associates, P.C.

Starting in 2024, most companies must report and file a Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) form with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN), a Bureau of the United States Treasury. These new reporting requirements went into effect on January 1, 2024, pursuant to 31 U.S.C.A. § 5336. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen details that these BOI requirements are intended to curtail “illicit money laundering and corruption schemes by individuals who hide behind “shell companies”¹. Shell companies are not outright illegal entities but are subject to abuse when used as tax havens, to funnel funds, or operate illegitimately. Illegitimate shell companies are typically formed without any intent to create active business operations and are instead formed to mask the identities of those conducting illicit transactions or criminal acts.

To file a BOI report, business owners and agents can go to <https://boiefiling.fincen.gov/> and electronically file the necessary Beneficial Ownership Information. Even if a business may be exempt from filing, businesses are still required to use the above website and file their exemption with the Department of Treasury. Businesses that are not exempt are categorized by the treasury as “Reporting Companies,” while businesses that are exempt are “Exempt Companies” and companies which do not need to report at all are “Non-Reporting Companies”.

As for any rule, there are always exceptions, and for the BOI reporting requirements, there are 23 exemptions. It may feel daunting and overly complicated to decide if your company may be exempt, but luckily the Treasury Department has authored a guide with tools, diagrams, and forms to simplify the process, which can be found by going to www.Fincen.gov and using the “Small Business Compliance Guide”.²

Generally, if your business is a Domestic Corporation or an LLC that was created through the filing of Articles of Incorporation or a Certificate of Organization through the Department of State, your

business would be classified as a reporting company and subject to the BOI disclosure requirements. The most common exempt entities, just to name a few of the twenty-three, are: Banks, Government Authorities, Credit Unions, Brokers or Dealers in Securities, Investment Companies, Investment Advisers, Insurance Companies, Accounting Firms, Public Utilities, Tax-Exempt Entities, Large Operating Companies, and Inactive Entities.

501(c) Non-Profit Organizations, defined under 26 I.R.C. § 501, as well as Charitable Trusts under 26 U.S.C.A. § 4947, Par. 1 & 2, are both exempt from the disclosure requirements. Individuals operating under a Fictitious Name are also exempt, as they are not business entities separate from the individuals or entities using the name. But just because these organizations are exempt does not mean they may ignore the BOI reporting requirements altogether. Authorized representatives must still file with the Department of Treasury and report that the entity is exempt, which will then prompt the filer to submit the report without the need to disclose any Business Ownership Information.

(Continued on page 38)

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LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

(Continued from page 37)

Large-operating companies, defined by FinCen as companies that employ a significant number of full-time staff and have substantial sales, may also be exempt depending on their size, reported taxes, and areas of service. To determine if the entity meets the threshold for an exemption, the following requirements must be met: the entity employs more than twenty (20) Full-Time employees within the United States' borders, operates a physical office within the United States, and filed a Federal Income Tax disclosure for the previous year for more than \$5,000,000.00 in gross receipts or sales, with the caveat that the \$5 million in transactions must stem from sources within the United States.

Reporting Companies that do not qualify for any of the 23 exemptions must identify the Beneficial Owners of the Entity. Beneficial Owners are defined under 31 U.S.C.A §5336(a)(3)(A), as "an individual who, directly or indirectly, through any contract, arrangement, understanding, relationship, or otherwise - exercises (i) substantial control over the entity, or (ii) owns or controls not less than twenty-five (25) percent of the ownership interests of the

entity." The Beneficial Owner Definition does not include the following: minor children, individuals acting as a nominee, intermediary, custodian, or agent on behalf of another, individuals acting solely as employees of the entity whose economic benefits and control derives solely from their employment role, an individual whose only interest is through a right of inheritance, and lastly, a creditor of the entity, so long as they do not control more than 25% of the entities' ownership interest or can exercise substantial control.

If there are any changes in the company's beneficial owners, such as a new Chief Executive Officer, the addition or removal of officers, a sale of ownership interests above the 25% threshold, or the death of a current beneficial owner, the company must file an updated BOI report. The filing of an updated BOI report with the Department of Treasury must occur within thirty (30) days after the date on which the change took place.

For business entities formed prior to January 1, 2024, the business must file its initial BOI report before January 1, 2025. For entities created after January 1, 2024, the entity has ninety (90) days after



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receiving confirmation of formation to file their BOI report. The ninety-day deadline also applies to entities previously formed before 2024 but which have recently domesticated their business in a new state or amended their operating structure and classification.

On March 1, 2024, the Federal Court for the Northern District of Alabama ruled that the BOI reporting requirement of the Corporate Transparency Act ("the Act") exceeded Congress' enumerated powers, specifically the Necessary and Proper Clause and the Commerce Clause.

This ruling concluded that the Act was unconstitutional as it applies only to the Plaintiffs, Mr. Isaac Winkles, the National Small Business Association (NSBA), and the NSBA's members. National Small Bus. United v. Yellen, 5:22-CV-1448-LCB, 2024 WL 899372 (N.D. Ala. Mar. 1, 2024). The Alabama District Court's ruling was appealed on March 11, 2024, and a final ruling is still pending. The FinCen BOI reporting requirements are still in effect for everyone who was not a party to the Alabama case and are still enforceable.

While this ruling and the Honorable Judge Liles C. Burke's Opinion give much to think about, until a final ruling is issued or more cases arise in our jurisdiction, reporting companies in Pennsylvania must still register and report their BOI information.

Failure to timely file the BOI report with the Department of Treasury may result in significant criminal or civil penalties, including a \$500.00 fine for each day that the violation continues, imprisonment for up to two years, and/or a fine up to \$10,000.00 against the Senior Officers of the entity which willfully fails to report.

It is crucially important to understand your entities' obligations for reporting with the Department of Treasury and to determine if your business falls into the category of an exempt business or reporting business. The Corporate Transparency Act Update for 2024 intends to secure and protect businesses across Mainstreet America, but failure to report can quickly backfire and result in significant and very real consequences for you and your business. Companies without their own in-house corporate counsel should contact an experienced business attorney for assistance in navigating the new Beneficial Ownership Information reporting requirements.

Chris Rothermel, Esquire is an associate attorney of Wolf, Baldwin & Associates, P.C. at the firm's Pottstown office and focuses his practice on small-business formation and business transactions. He may be reached at 610.323.7436 or by e-mail to cthermel@wolfbaldwin.com.

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xy7eZuYfz8>

2 https://www.fincen.gov/sites/default/files/shared/BOI_Small_Compliance_Guidev1.1-FINAL.pdf

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THE RISE OF VINTAGE



OPINION

By Barry Cassidy

While in London for the Phillies game, my wife and I had a little bit of free time to shop and dine out. In Chelsea, we visited the John Lewis Department Store. It was a full-blown department store with electronics and appliance departments. I think it was six floors packed with goods. In the ladies' clothing section, I took a seat while my wife browsed the English fashions.

As I sat in the chair, I faced what appeared to be a pop-up store with women's fashions. This installation was by the escalator, so it received a lot of foot traffic. It was a prime spot. The pop-up was called "A Sign of the Times". I did not think much of it until the young lady working the pop-up came over to say hi. We chatted about how she was a model helping out a friend trying to establish a business.

The business was high-end women's clothes. These clothes cost a lot, but they are used by someone who probably overpaid them initially. I related to her

that while in Haight Asbury a few weeks before, I saw a lot of vintage stores and people concentrating on used clothing. Then she asked, "Is it high-end designer clothes like ours?" and I answered, "Some of them."

Then, I wondered what the name of the pop-up meant. It meant that things were getting to the point where people were selling their high-end personal clothing because of the downturn in economic conditions. It is a sign of the times, literally.

We are certainly in turbulent times, and inflation is most likely straining family budgets. The internet has allowed people to sign up to be fast food delivery personnel or on-call chauffeurs instead of having a fixed-location job to survive in this economy. Vintage stores may be a symptom of people selling their possessions to stay alive.

I did see some higher-end vintage stores along the way. There were a few bridal stores that concentrated on used bridal dresses and, in some cases, were the window dressing for a higher-end vintage store.

(Continued on page 42)



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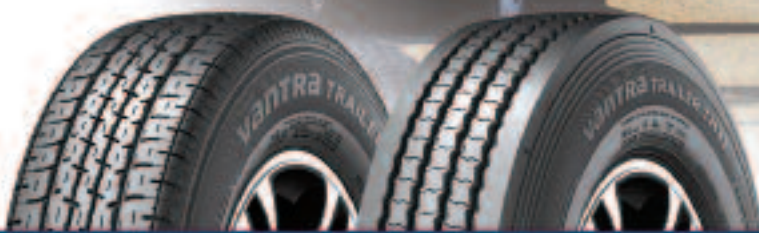
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OPINION

(Continued from page 40)

In most cases, there was a lot of junk in the vintage store, but nostalgic junk. I did not classify them as a thrift store unless they advertised as a thrift store. Most thrift stores are non-profit-related income-producing by selling donated merchandise.

But then I started thinking about what this means. Does it mean that people are affected by the economy or just a desire to associate with something from the past? I thought of a song by Gil Scott Heron that could offer a different perspective...

The idea concerns the fact that this country wants nostalgia

They want to go back as far as they can - even if it's only as far as last week

Not to face now or tomorrow, but to face backwards

*And yesterday was the day of our cinema heroes riding to the rescue at the last possible moment
The day of the man in the white hat or the man on the white horse - or the man who always came to save America at the last moment - someone always came to save America at the last moment - especially in "B" movies*

So, I reflected on whether we want to return to how things were. Could it be true that the rise of vintage stores does not reflect the desperation of people dealing with an economy that sees the cost of

goods spiral upward? Instead, it is about people wanting to associate with an idealized past, which does not seem like an option at this point. So who is going to save America?

Later in the song Heron describes the kind of person we need to save us from this nonsense...

*Marine tough the man is
Bogart tough the man is
Cagney tough the man is
Hollywood tough the man is
Cheap steak tough*

I am sure we all have experienced tough cheap steak, and at \$9.99 a pound, it is no longer a bargain. It is now expensive and there really is no real resale market for used cheap steak in the vintage stores. Plus, in San Francisco, you can get it for a fee on the sidewalk.

It is also a "sign of the times" that the Canadian Prime Minister is concerned about civil war in the United States. I asked friends on both ends of the political spectrum, and no one seemed ready to take up arms. This kind of rhetoric makes me think maybe Gil was right, maybe we are living in a "B" Movie.

Barry Cassidy is a freelance grant and economic development consultant. He can be reached at barrycassidy@comcast.net.

PENNDOT RELEASES DRAFT PLAN TO GUIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS



**By Anthony Hennen,
The Center Square**

PennDOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan was released to the public last month, laying out how the agency plans to spend almost \$29 billion in the next few years to build "a

safe and reliable transportation network that connects Pennsylvanians to opportunities and services," according to an agency press release.

"Infrastructure that serves everyone requires input from everyone," PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll said. "Planning for the future of transportation infrastructure is a complex process, and I encourage everyone to submit their comments and take part in this process."

Most of the prioritized projects and spending (from local, state, federal, and private sources) are concentrated on highway/bridge and transit projects.

PennDOT expects to spend \$4.4 billion on highway and bridge funding in 2025, dropping slightly to \$4.2 billion, \$4 billion, and \$4.1 billion through 2028. Most of that money, \$11.5 billion of \$16.8 billion, comes from the federal government.

Money for transit will start high in 2025, at \$3.2 billion, then slightly dropping annually to \$2.9 billion in 2028. But most of those funds will come from state sources (\$8.1 billion out of \$12.1 billion).

The STIP also notes a long-standing PennDOT talking point: A lack of funding to cover basic upkeep.

"Pennsylvania has one of the largest Interstate Systems in the nation, with more than 2,743 miles of roadway and 2,216 bridge," the STIP draft noted. "Based on asset condition it is estimated that the annual need on the Interstates is \$1.2 billion to meet basic maintenance and preservation needs. Currently, PennDOT spends between \$700-\$750 million per year on the Interstate System."

Federal spending has been boosted by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, with Pennsylvania's highway and bridge share expected to increase by \$4 billion over five years, of which the Interstate program will get \$70 million annually.

As spending goes up, though, so does the expectation of danger on the road.

"These projects are also anticipated to provide significant improvements to highway safety and traffic reliability for both passenger and freight travel," the draft plan noted, but expects the number and rate of fatalities, serious injuries, and non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries to increase.

Pennsylvania is under a federal mandate to make a plan for how to increase safety for non-motorists (called "vulnerable road users") due to fatalities being too high in the commonwealth.

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TRADEMARK BASICS FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

Most people recognize a trademark as the small symbol that sits at the end of a business or product name or logo. What's not as well-known is the importance that a registered trademark symbol holds for businesses in preventing copycat brands from either intentionally or accidentally using their business name to make a profit.

If you're starting a small business, take the time to understand the basics of trademarking and why it's critical for your long-term success. Trademarking your company name and brand is one of the smartest ways to protect your small business. Failing to register your trademark can result in financial losses and threaten

your ability to stay in business. Here are five basic ways that a registered trademark can safeguard your small business.

Trademarking Your Brand is a Smart Business Move

There are several reasons why trademarking your brand is good for business and a smart legal move. Here are five important ways that a registered trademark can safeguard your ability to do business.

1. Your Brand is Protected

A company name or logo with a registered trademark attached to it shows the world that the company is the sole owner and that those marks cannot be used by another entity. This definitive line in the sand protects against other companies from either intentionally or accidentally using the same or similar branding elements.

(Continued on page 46)

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Ask SCORE

(Continued from page 44)

According to SCORE mentor and retired IP Attorney Charles Gumpel, “If your company’s brand image is stolen or closely duplicated, the result (financial and otherwise) could be devastating to your business. For instance, customers might be unable to identify the ‘real’ brand from the impostors, and you would probably never reclaim those customers even if you found a way to stop the impostor. Other adverse effects could also occur, which ultimately might lead to the termination of your business.”

Without a registered trademark, it can be a lot harder for you to prove that another company has infringed upon your brand. The opposing business will try to prove that your business does not have ownership of the mark or may make a case that they owned the name or logo first. A registered trademark gives you undeniable proof that your trademark is rightfully yours.

2. You Can Collect More Money to Cover Damages and Lawyer Fees

When your business is protected by a registered trademark, any infringement upon your brand is much easier to prove, and you’re more likely to win your case.

Being able to prove that your brand was infringed upon can also result in a greater likelihood that you’ll collect financial compensation for potential losses. You have a better chance of recouping legal fees, too.

3. A Trademark is Subject to Federal Jurisdiction

Because trademarks are registered through the United States Patent and Trademark Office (<https://www.uspto.gov/>) a Federal agency, you can bring your trademark infringement case to the Federal level, bypassing state courts. This could be crucial to winning your case if the company that infringes on your trademark is located in a different state.

4. Trademarks Up the Resale Value of Your Business

Trademarks protect your business and insulate it from potential legal challenges down the road. They also ensure your brand isn’t confused with other companies that may offer similar services or products. Each of these factors adds to the value of your business and can make it a more attractive investment to potential buyers should you ever go to sell.



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5. You Prevent Accidentally Infringing on Someone Else's Brand

This is a big one! Accidentally infringing on someone else's trademarked brand will cost you and could potentially ruin your business. If you don't research whether the company name and branding you've chosen are already in use – or extremely close to another trademarked brand's style – you can be forced to give up the name. Potentially worse, you may be legally required to give up all profits earned while your unregistered mark was in use, and this can be on top of other attorney's fees and damages. This will quickly sink most small businesses and may be the biggest reason on the list to trademark your business.

When you're ready to trademark your brand, start by doing an initial search in the USPTO's Trademark Database (<https://www.uspto.gov/trademarks-application-process/search-trademark-database>) to verify no one else has applied for the same mark. To learn more about the importance of trademarks and to begin the application process, go to USPTO.gov.

You Need to be Able to Clearly Prove You Fully Own Your Business' Name and Logo

Even after you've registered your company's trademark, expect to work to prove that you do, in fact, own the mark and were the first to file for and use the brand.

The laws that govern trademark registration and use can confuse the most experienced business owners. Properly trademarking your business' brand and products is not an area of your business to skimp on or handle alone. Enlist the support of a SCORE mentor to help you navigate the trademark registration process. You'll benefit from your SCORE mentor's experience with trademark registration and better ensure that you're properly safeguarding your small business. For more information about starting or operating a small business, contact SCORE TriCounty, www.score.org/tricounty.



Today at SCORE, we are on the frontline fighting to keep Main Street America in business. If you believe that you can help a small business with your experience, advice and mentoring please think about joining us. Email us at tricounty@scorevolunteer.org, call us 610.327.2673, or to learn more.

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USE MINDFUL MANAGEMENT TO CONTROL ROUTINE COSTS

You're very meticulous when it comes to providing quality service or products to your customers. So why treat your routine administrative expenses the same way? Every extra dime or dollar you spend on supplies, photocopies, postage, etc. adds up. Taken together, those "little things" can take a huge chunk out of your profits.

Stiff competition and thin profit margins have made running lean a necessity for most small businesses, so it's important to establish smart buying habits from the outset. The steps are not complicated, nor do they require fancy financial formulas. Cutting costs is all about common sense. You just have to know where to look.

Here are five ways to save your small business money on the simple things:

1. Avoid buying only name-brand items in small quantities. Shop for bargains online. Superstores like Office Depot, Staples and Office Max offer "store brands" at reduced prices. And when you establish an online account, they'll often send coupons worth \$10 or \$20 off orders of \$100 or more.
2. Don't photocopy high-volume items that you can print for less. Copies typically cost five to 15 cents each, even if you do them yourself, including paper, toner, labor and maintenance. Printing can lower costs to three cents or less. The biggest cost items are forms, flyers and form letters that you *think* you use in small quantities.
3. Think of your inventory as company cash sitting on a shelf or in a warehouse doing nothing. Costs include storage, insurance and taxes, among others. Keep good records and regularly root out dead items.
4. Express shipments for next morning delivery are costly. Consider next afternoon or maybe two- or three-day service.
5. Review vendor relationships at least annually for Internet services, phone, wireless, DSL, shipping, legal, printing and other day to day expenses. Prices and package deals change and you may be overpaying.

Spending wisely on your routine expenses also helps you be more alert for ideas that will make other aspects of your operations more cost-effective. It all adds up to better value for your customers, and a healthier bottom line for your business.

For more money saving ideas for your small business, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business." SCORE is a nonprofit organization of more than 13,000 volunteer business counselors who provide free, confidential business counseling and training workshops to small business owners. Call 610.327.2673 for the Pottstown SCORE chapter or find a counselor online at www.score.org/tricounty.

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Hypnosis - Your Path to Living your Best Life

What is hypnosis? Probably not what you think! It's a lovely state of high suggestibility that is completely natural and very similar to what we go through each day as you begin to wake up in the morning and fall asleep each night. This Theta brainwave state also happens naturally when you are driving your car and don't remember the drive when you get to your destination.

Frankly, our subconscious mind is always just trying to keep us safe and wants to avoid things it perceives as uncomfortable. As a result, it often puts up blocks and barriers that really don't serve us. As a certified professional hypnotist, I am highly trained to help you remove the blocks that hold you back and limit you. Sports performance, self-confidence, money blocks, self-esteem and test performance are just a few of the things that can be addressed with hypnosis.

Here's what people are saying:

"Jane is an amazing hypnotist!! She has a way of making you feel so comfortable and relaxed and trusting. She's got a soothing voice. I truly experienced a

deeper sense of relaxation each session and the work I'm doing sticks a bit deeper. I've learned how to go to a deep state of relaxing on my own and feel that my sense of confidence is building. I highly recommend Jane and feel that the work is easier than I thought and look forward to every session!!"

"I had a few hypnosis sessions prior to the start of my soccer season. Jane gently guided me into a very pleasant hypnotic state and during which I visualized myself playing a fantastic game. I saw myself reacting to the play instinctively and with skill. I could hear people cheering and feel the pride of accomplishment. She also taught me a simple self-hypnosis technique to use to reinforce the sessions. Hypnosis helped me reach inside and play with more confidence and passion. I had it inside me the whole time. It was a very successful season for me, and I was awarded MVP! I believe the sessions definitely helped me play at my best."

Curious to learn more? Schedule a free informational session with Jane Gober, NGH Certified Hypnotist today! <https://yourbestlifehypnosis.com>



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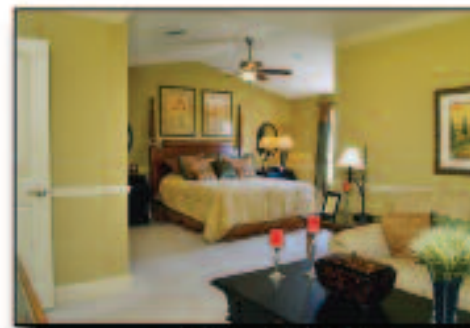
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ROUTE 422 BUSINESS ADVISOR NETWORKING MEET & GREET

Current advertisers and colleagues gathered in Wyomissing for an appreciation event hosted by Route 422 Business Advisor.

Architectural firm and magazine advertiser **Muhlenberg Greene Architects** in Wyomissing, PA served as the backdrop for a networking event last month on May 29, 2024. The design studio teamed up with **Route 422 Business Advisor** to create an intimate gathering for select clients and colleagues in the area to network from 5-7 PM.

The party featured food from **Baird's Catering**, with Chef William Baird serving generous hors d'oeuvres, fruit trays, and desserts while *Route 422 Business Advisor* provided beer and wine to complement the offerings. Baird's has been in business for over 30 years, providing a customized menu for the event.

In addition to hanging out in the design studio, guests were invited by the architecture team to enjoy their vast collection of built models from the Lego® World Architecture series, including the Lego® ICONS™ set Eiffel Tower with 10,001 parts, the tallest model to date.

Attendees also had an opportunity to engage in exploring their design skills by building a tree using their EverBlock Systems™ Life-Sized Plastic Bricks. Local photographer Don Carrick, owner of **Studio 413** gathered a group of builders together in the conference room for a photo with the constructed tree.

"We really appreciate our advertisers, and wanted to express our gratitude," said Bill Haley, publisher. As for Patti, the networking guru of the publishing duo, "I enjoy connecting with my advertisers in person as often as possible, it's so wonderful to have people together in one place where we can all interact, and I can say thank you in a tangible way."

Attendees from up and down the Route 422 corridor included colleagues from **Fast Signs Pottstown**, **Fleetwood Bank**, **Barry Issett and Associates**, **Reading-Berks Association of Realtors**, the **Berks Business Education Coalition**, **Everything Printing**, **Morefield Technology**, **Riverfront Federal Credit Union**, **Bell Media Group**, and **Club Pilates**. Principal architects Jim Sarro and Bob Conklin of **MG Architects** provided short tours and warm welcomes with Suzanne Cody and Jacob Sockel from their team.

At the close of the evening, *Route 422 Business Advisor* donated the catering overages to **Opportunity House of Reading**. Director of Development, Stacy Perlaki, said, "The food was amazing. It made the shelter's entire day. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

The party was a wonderful way to welcome the upcoming summer months and meet new business contacts.

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