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**Joseph Albert, DO, MRO,
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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 Cadzo 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.

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

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PHOTO BY STEVE LADNER PHOTOGRAPHY

Cover Story: Patriot Pest Solutions is a veteran-owned, pet-friendly, community-driven local business with a Certified Entomologist on staff offering commercial and residential customers environmentally-friendly pest control services with a 100% satisfaction guarantee.



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Appliance Specialists
Celebrates 100 Year
Anniversary



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Early Spring?

Time to Ring Patriot Pest Solutions

By Kathy Hunt

If you looked out the window or stepped outside this past February, you may have spotted bluebirds flitting from bare branch to bare branch, groundhogs loping across half-frozen lawns, and mosquitoes floating along in the brisk air. There was only one explanation for these unseasonal sightings — spring came early this year.



JAMES AND DENISE HARRISON



Patriot Pest Solutions' technicians are state-licensed and specially trained in humane squirrel trapping, removal and exclusion services.

While many love the warmer days that a premature spring brings, no one gets excited about the return of flies, ants, and other nuisances that largely hibernate during the cold winter months. Unfortunately, milder winters and warmer summers result in longer seasons for insects, including black-legged or deer ticks, which carry the bacteria that causes Lyme Disease, and mosquitoes. The latter are transmitters of harmful viruses such as West Nile and Eastern Equine Encephalitis. With 2024 ranking as the hottest year in recorded history, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and scientists predicting that 2025's temperature patterns will be similar, you can expect to see more bugs outdoors and inside.

Instead of fiddling with bug zappers, fly swatters, and bowls of vinegar, lemon juice, or coffee grounds, the most efficient and effective way to combat these pests is to contact the professionals at Patriot Pest Solutions. This



woman-owned and veteran-owned business has been keeping pests at bay in Southeastern Pennsylvania for over 14 years.

"Homeowners have to expect an early spring. As soon as they start seeing signs of insects that they don't want inside their homes, they should call because it's only going to get worse," Denice Harrison said. Harrison is the co-owner of Patriot Pest Solutions, 156 West Ridge Pike in Limerick. The business supports customers in Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties.

Controlling ticks and other insect infestations

Due to the warmer weather, entomologists anticipate that 2025 will be an especially bad year for ticks. "We've not had the normal winter season for them to die off," Harrison said. "This will be a horrendous year for ticks."

Multiple frigid days where the temperature is at or below 14 degrees Fahrenheit can kill off black-legged ticks burrowing in leaf piles, grasses, shrubs, and shaded areas. During weeks where the temperature fluctuates between below- and above-freezing or stays above 32 degrees each day, ticks not only survive but also thrive. Go into the woods or your yard on a warm winter day and you could end up with a tick clinging to your pants, sock, or worse — attached to your skin, spreading germs as it feeds off your blood. As white-tailed deer and white-footed mice lose more habitat and begin bedding down in suburban yards, we can expect increased encounters with ticks, which travel on these animals.

To combat ticks, Patriot Pest Solutions has devised a year-round prevention plan. After inspecting a property and identifying tick hot spots, the licensed technician creates a treatment plan using effective, environmentally-conscious measures. Patriot Pest's remediation and prevention plans ensure that ticks go away and stay away.



Chris Gentile – Bed Bug and Spotted Lantern Fly Specialist

Along with ticks, Patriot Pest has a six-month, organic mosquito-control plan that is similarly safe and cost-effective. Service begins in May and ends after October. During this time, the customer's patio, porch, foliage, vegetation, and other outdoor locations are kept mosquito-free. Treatments can be carried out at homes, apartments, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and other residential or commercial sites.

As part of the mosquito plan, a technician will evaluate the customer's living or workspace and suggest ways to minimize the risk of swarms. One approach would be to remove any standing water, which is the mosquito's breeding ground.

In addition to ticks and mosquitoes, Patriot Pest Solutions has treatment plans for ants, fleas, termites, cockroaches, bedbugs, stinkbugs, and spotted lanternflies.

(Continued on page 8)



James is an associate certified entomologist and a member of the National Pest Management Association.



Licensed entomologist, James Harrison, holds weekly meetings to discuss cases and train his technicians on the latest techniques in pest management.

"We customize our plans to meet each situation and each person's needs," Harrison said.

If they bite, sting, swarm, damage property, or simply are a constant source of aggravation, Patriot Pest has the solution.

"Pest control is fluid and our methods need to be as well," Harrison said. "There's always a different thing. Think back 10 years or so, when stink bugs were terrible. We don't get calls very often for them now. Three years ago, we were invaded by the spotted lanternfly. There are still a few patches of spotted lanternflies throughout the counties but it's not like it was. They've moved on. With each new pest, we have to gear up and work with the Department of Agriculture to make sure that we have the training and are properly licensed and certified to handle the problem," she said.

Keeping pests out of homes and businesses

Patriot Pest supports both residential and commercial clients. For residential clients, it has a Home Pest Protection plan, which consists of an initial assessment and three service visits scheduled throughout the year. Should pests appear in between service calls, a technician will perform a free, emergency treatment. Patriot Pest employs a combination of long-lasting materials, baits, and traps placed around the interior and exterior of a home. These are the same low-odor, low-toxicity



products that it uses in schools, hospitals, and other high-traffic sites.

Often, animal lovers express concern about how pest control will impact their pets. These products may not harm people, but dogs, cats, guinea pigs, and other animal family members are smaller and seem more vulnerable than humans.

Customers shouldn't worry about their pets becoming ill from or harmed by a Patriot Pest treatment. "We're pet owners and we love our dogs," Harrison said. "We want to make sure we keep other people's pets safe, too."

The concern for safety and welfare applies to commercial clients, too. These customers include industrial warehouses, hospitals, hotels, office buildings, restaurants, retail stores, and schools. As with its Home Pest Protection plan, a fully-insured, qualified technician

will assess the situation and prepare a treatment plan that fits the setting and needs.

Commercial clients should understand the importance not only of identifying the need for but also staying on top of pest control. Patriot Pest's website points out the following: "Seeing a single ant, cockroach, or flea means there are many more waiting to be discovered. Spot treatment with over-the-counter sprays may kill the bugs you see, but only a trained pest control professional can eliminate your pest problems once and for all."

Along with ant, cockroach, and flea plans, Patriot Pest offers bed bug remediation and prevention through heat, steam, and chemical treatments. It likewise provides in-ground and above-ground termite inspections and remedies. The latter eradicate subterranean termite colonies and stop infestations before serious wood damage can occur. Generally, termite damage is not covered by commercial or homeowner's insurance policies. These destructive insects are deemed to be a preventable problem, one that should be addressed and managed with routine pest service.

Additionally, Patriot Pest has commercial rodent and wildlife control programs, vegetation management, and bioremediation of fats, greases, and oils in commercial kitchens. Initial consultations and estimates are free. Members of Spring Ford, and Perkiomen Valley Chambers of Commerce receive a discount on services. Patriot Pest belongs to the Phoenixville and Perkiomen Valley Chambers of Commerce.



When birds, deer, and other wildlife get too close

Sometimes, insects aren't the issue. Instead, it's feathered, scaled, or furry creatures such as birds, squirrels, and raccoons. With this spring's early arrival, people can expect to see birds nesting much sooner. One inconvenient spot where house sparrows, starlings, and blackbirds choose to build homes are roof, exhaust, and dryer vents.

"If we go to a home or building and find an empty nest, the technician will remove it, sterilize the area, and cover the vent with a grate," Harrison said. "But, if the tech finds babies in the nest, he doesn't touch them. Instead, he leaves the nest alone and returns after the babies have left. Then, he takes out the nest and covers the vent."

People have become more proactive about birds, Harrison said. Many will have Patriot Pest install vent grates before or at the very beginning of nesting season. The cost of this precautionary measure is minimal.

In addition to humanely removing Birds from homes, Patriot Pest clears out rodents such as mice, moles, voles, rats, and squirrels, raccoons, groundhogs, skunks, opossums, and foxes. They also take care of bats and snakes!

"We have a schedule of when squirrels, raccoons, and other animals are having babies," Harrison said. "Sometimes, we even find baby raccoons in someone's attic, which is a real challenge but one we take on."

Patriot Pest's technicians are licensed with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, National Wildlife Control Operators Association, and the Pennsylvania Trappers Association. They are likewise fully insured. The wildlife removal and exclusion plan that they use was created by business co-owner and military veteran James Harrison.

To stay on top of consumer needs, Patriot Pest anticipates introducing a new and highly desired offering to the region — deer repellent. Suggested by Patriot Pest technician and wildlife specialist Eric Gromalski, the treatment plan would discourage deer from devouring trees, shrubs, and other vegetation on the customer's property. Harrison stated that Valley Forge residents have been particularly susceptible to herds of deer demolishing their shrubs.



"As a business owner, you have to fan the flame of interest with your employees," Harrison said. "When a technician comes in, mentions a customer needs a certain service, has researched the service, and asks if we can do it, we need to look into it and move on it. That's what we want. We want our staff to have an interest and new ideas. We can't be complacent."

The new service would involve spraying a solution on the greenery that makes it unappetizing to deer and forces the animals to look elsewhere for food.

"When you look at the cost of replacing shrubs, it's thousands of dollars. Our service will have a small, green footprint and be convenient and cost-effective," Harrison said.

Making service convenient and appealing for customers

To make scheduling, payments, and pest control even easier for its customers, in 2024, Patriot Pest added an online customer portal to its website. Clients simply click on "My Account" at the top right corner of the Patriot Pest homepage — <https://www.patriotpestsolutions.net> — and sign in to their accounts. If they're new to the portal, they can sign up for online account access by entering their phone number and either their email address or billing account number. Once they're logged in, customers can quickly and securely add or update payment information, view and print invoices, and download payment receipts. They can also manage account settings and update information online.

Understanding that, in today's busy world, many people prefer to text instead of phoning or emailing, customers can now text to arrange an appointment. Texting is done through the customer portal.



Anyone who does call Patriot Pest speaks with either Quinn Schadler or Linda Smiley, who has been with the company for 10 years.

"Over our 14 years in business, we've come to realize that easily 70 percent of our customer base and call-ins, both residential and business, are women," Harrison said. "My office manager, Linda, is so empathetic and has all this experience and knowledge. I get tons of Google reviews about how she and Quinn are so helpful and knowledgeable, and how 'I was so stressed but after that call, I felt so much better.' And it's because of them," she said.

She added that it's important to acknowledge that Patriot Pest Solutions is co-owned by a veteran, her husband James, but it is also co-owned by a woman, and the office is staffed by women.

Those interested in additional information about or to schedule a consultation, visit Patriot Pest Solution's website at <https://www.patriotpestsolutions.net>. You can also contact the business by email at info@patriotpestsolutions.net or by phone at 610.489.5136.



Lynda Smiley is our Office Manager and we are celebrating her Ten Year Anniversary this month!



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Arrowhead has a snack bar at the Pro Shop where you can get sandwiches and sodas at any time during the day. They also have a Snack Shop at the 10th hole where you can get sandwiches on the weekends or use vending machines during the week. There are restrooms at the Snack Shop as well.

Having an outing for your business, or a fundraiser for your favorite organization? Arrowhead has plenty of room for social and industrial leagues, daytime and evening. The course can accommodate up to 200 golfers, playing on 18 holes with carts, or more players if some are willing to walk. The covered pavilion has



three open sides, and will seat up to 150 people. The use of the pavilion is available at no charge. You are welcome to bring your own food or outside catering for your event.

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MARKETING TIPS

By Julie Huff, Copywriter,
beMarketing

Scrolling. Skimming. Swiping. With shrinking attention spans, it's harder than ever to

make your content stand out. Traditional blogs and static posts aren't enough anymore — your audience wants to participate. Interactive content is making some headway in the game. Studies show it generates twice the engagement and doubles conversion rates compared to static content. So, how can your brand use it to captivate your audience? Let's dive in.

How to Use Interactive Content to Boost Engagement

- **Polls & Quizzes:** Quick, fun, and easy to share. Whether it's a personality quiz or an Instagram poll, they drive engagement while giving you valuable customer insights.

- **Interactive Infographics:** Visual storytelling beats long text every time. Interactive infographics let users explore data, making complex information easy to understand.

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- **Live Q&As & Webinars:** Build credibility and trust by connecting with your audience in real time through live Q&A sessions and interactive webinars.

- **User-generated content (UGC):** Get customers involved by encouraging them to create content for you, from reviews to branded challenges. This will boost trust and social proof.

How AI Will Push Interactive Content Even Further

- **Personalized Experiences:** AI will customize quizzes, product recommendations, and engagement tools based on user behavior.

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SPRING CLEAN SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

By Theresa Mintzer

Spring is here! It's time to clean up your social media and keep it up to date. Make a good first impression

for potential customers.

- **Branding** — Your branding should be consistent across all social platforms. Visitors should immediately recognize your brand colors and logo.

- **Information** — Your information should be complete and accurate. Check your listed hours and contact information, including any relevant seasonal information.

- **Content** — Posting regularly will help you stay in your followers' feeds. Take some time to plan your content over the next month or more. Most platforms allow you to schedule your content directly or you can find a scheduler. Create content that is engaging, educational, and informative. If you need a little help, try ChatGPT for some new ideas.

- **Images and Video** — You want to have images that make them stop to take a second look when they are scrolling through their feed. Additionally, try to post short and long form videos. This helps with the all-important algorithm.

- **Engagement** — Are you engaging with you customers? If someone comments on a post, tags you, or shares a post you should acknowledge it. Engagement is important for the algorithm to help your reach. If someone takes the time and effort to make a comment it is important to acknowledge them.

- **Messenger** — Remember to respond to messages quickly. You can also set up greetings and automated responses. Check out ManyChat to help you engage with people.

Social media is one of the first places many people turn to when they want to learn about new products and services. Make a great first impression by creating a consistent presence.



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Eric Miller

Rosann Bar

Lisa Karl

POTTSTOWN AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (PAED) WELCOMES THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Pottstown Area Economic Development (PAED) recently announced three new Members to its Board of Directors, welcoming Rosann Bar, Ph. D., Dean of Academic Innovation, Montgomery County Community College; Lisa Karl, Vice President of Sales & Strategic Partnerships, Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board; and Eric Miller, Commercial Loan Officer, Peoples Security & Trust Bank.

Rosann Bar received her Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University in NYC, and as Chair of the department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at

Caldwell University, Caldwell, NJ, taught Sociology and Anthropology for nearly 20 years. She educated students in culture and social life by designing multiple travel abroad seminars to various destinations around the world. A Fulbright Scholar, Dr. Bar was the Dean of the School of Business and Social Sciences at Ocean County College in Toms River, NJ before assuming the position of Dean of Academic Innovation at Montgomery County Community College.

(Continued on page 16)

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Learn more at: www.geyerauctions.com

PAED WELCOMES THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

(Continued from page 15)

A graduate of Temple University and Disney's College Program, Lisa Karl brings her extensive background in hospitality working at hotel properties throughout Southeastern & Central Pennsylvania. She currently serves as the Vice President of Sales & Strategic Partnerships at Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board, where she leads efforts in sports, conventions, and global tourism. Currently Lisa serves on the West Pikeland Township Conservation Land Trust Board and volunteers with Hope Springs Equestrian Therapy.

Eric Miller is a seasoned Commercial Loan Officer at Peoples Security Bank & Trust, bringing over a decade of experience in the financial services industry. Eric has developed a strong foundation in customer service and risk analysis, working closely with clients across diverse industries, including real estate development, logistics, agriculture, professional services, and manufacturing. A graduate of Owen J. Roberts High School, Eric earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Franklin & Marshall College.

As shared by PAED's Executive Director, Peggy Lee-Clark, "PAED is fortunate to have a Board made up of visionary leaders from both the private and public sectors who play a pivotal role in shaping the economic revitalization of Pottstown. We welcome Rosann, Lisa, and Eric to the Board to join in PAED's work to promote business growth."

Pottstown Area Economic Development (PAED) provides services to businesses and organizations seeking to invest, expand or relocate including assistance with site selection, commercial and industrial real estate development, access to resources and workforce development. PAED's efforts stimulate investment, which helps maintain and enhance the tax base, retain and create job opportunities, and restores, utilizes or removes under-utilized buildings.

For more information about Pottstown Area Economic Development (PAED), please contact Peggy Lee-Clark, Executive Director at 610.575.7233.



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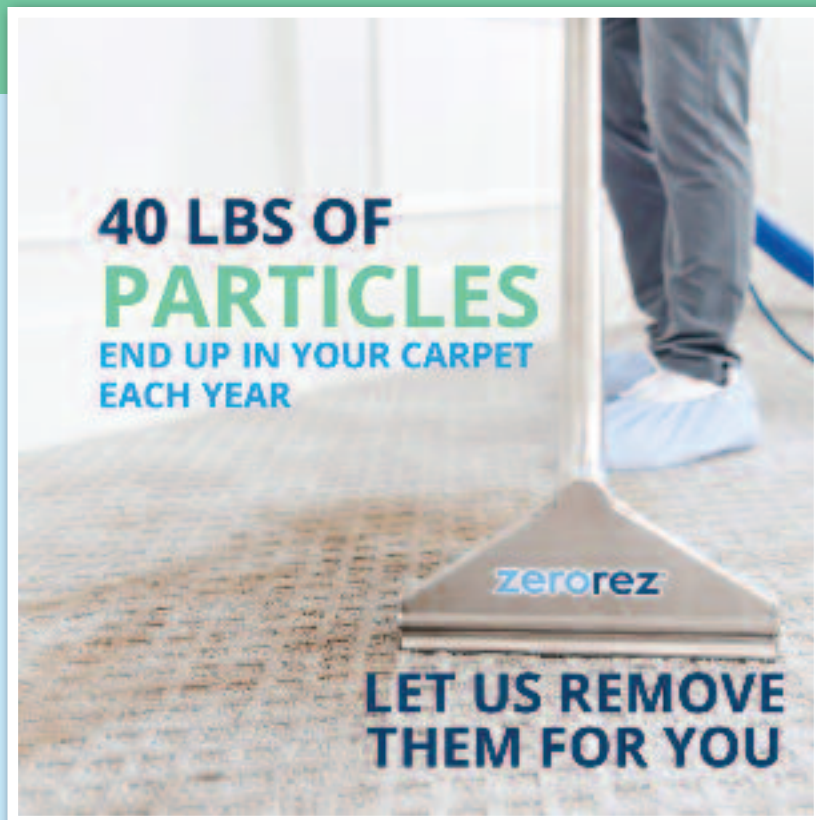
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In addition to batteries, we sell industrial supplies such as: Wolf's Head oil; DEF Fluid; Pig Mat products; NEBO flashlight products; Scott shop towels; Absorb-It floor dry; non-chlorinated and chlorinated brake cleaner; penetrating lubricants; drums of isopropyl alcohol; Purple Power; Spray Nine; and many other industrial supplies.

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BUSINESS PROFILE

Wolfrun Landscapes

Wolfrun Landscapes is a full-service landscape company that has been serving Berks County since 1995. We offer a wide variety of services from residential property maintenance to land restoration and rehabilitation. We enjoy helping out our local non-profit environmental groups to give back to our community and improve the quality of our land and water. We regularly attend update training and classes to continue to use best management practices for our landscapes and wild lands. Our goal is to give you quality service with an environmentally friendly approach.

Our landscape service comes in many forms from maintenance, to design and installation. We offer tree health care pruning and removal, proper pruning of shrubs, garden restoration and installation, drainage, weeding and mulching, landscape light installation, water features, hardscapes from pathways to large patios and stone walls, stream side restoration, erosion management, and invasive pest management.

With 25 years of experience, we design gardens that are beneficial to wildlife while giving you the satisfaction of a bold and beautiful garden. Using different colors and textures to give you a year-round beauty of a functional garden. Non-native plants have flooded the nurseries which some eventually spread out of our communities, uncontrolled, and into the wild taking over our native plants our wildlife thrive off of. We landscape with a different approach. Our land is precious; we must cherish it while we plant for our enjoyment. It's our own duty to be good stewards to our land.



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Our hardscaping service offers beautiful natural stone patios, pervious patios, retaining walls, walkways, staircases, and much more using natural stone so the beauty never fades. Natural stone gives your garden or gathering area a feel- more connected to earth. Whether it's a clean-cut patio or an irregular walkway the stone can change the way an area feels. Adding boulders to a landscape can change the way it reaches out to you.



Wolfrun owner, Mark Priebe

Our tree service offers educated pruning and care of trees to preserve the health and longevity of its natural beauty. We also do large and small removals to ensure the safety of your property. Berks county has many standing dead Ash trees that pose a serious threat as they die very rapidly from the Emerald Ash Borer. The trees become brittle fast so waiting too long can pose serious danger to be lingering around your property. Our team has 10 years' experience removing hazardous and difficult trees from residential and public properties.

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EMPIRE GROUP

Celebrating 70 Years

Empire Group started 70 years ago, beginning with its first subsidiary, Empire Wrecking Co. of Reading, PA (dba Empire Services). Founded by Harry "Whitey" O'Neill, Jr., in 1955 as a demolition company, the company was under his leadership until his death in 1972. At that time, his son Harry O'Neill III took on the responsibility of the company. He was joined by his brother Todd after several years, and together the two brothers grew Empire Group to include not only Empire Services, but also Berks Transfer, Delaware Valley Contractors, Delaware Valley Utility Contractors, and Elk Environmental Services.



"As Empire Group evolved over the past 70 years, I was fortunate to have my brother Todd by my side. Together we grew the company to several subsidiaries. After 50 years of leading Empire, I am confident that Empire Group will continue to prosper under Todd's leadership along with the talent and knowledge of our employees."
 — Harry J. O'Neill III, Corporate Officer

A significant part of the company's history is its employees, who have shaped its success. Raymond Geiger, Empire Wrecking's first full-time truck driver, reflects on his decades of work with the company.

"I was fortunate to work alongside Harry O'Neill, Jr., and his two sons, Harry III and Todd. Over the years, I had the opportunity to work on many memorable projects, such as the demolition of the Strand Theater and the original Boscov's, as well as the cleanup after the 1972 flood. I retired from Empire Wrecking as General Manager in 2005. There were many ups and downs throughout my career, but I would not trade those experiences for anything." — Raymond Geiger, Retired GM of Empire

TODAY'S EMPIRE GROUP: A POWERFUL FORCE IN THE INDUSTRY

Today Empire Group is a staple in the community, and its five subsidiaries are powered by more than 200 employees and 400 pieces of equipment. The company has been involved with numerous notable demolition projects over the years encompassing entire city blocks to make way for new endeavors in Reading.

"It is difficult to pinpoint my favorite project over the 24 years I've been with Empire Services. Memories are not necessarily tilted towards the largest projects, but more towards some of the unique and challenging ones. International Waxess was interesting due to the process of removing structures and other features damaged during the explosion which happened over a decade ago. There were also some emergency demolition projects due to fires like the Lattice Handbags building, where we assisted in the fire fight and demolished it afterwards. Also, there was the CHOP project where we removed 14 floors of concrete slabs, wall panels and other features, making room for a new addition. Empire Group has grown over these 70 years due to the ability to read an evolving marketplace, streamlining processes to improve efficiency, and offering new services to clients." — Allen Dejewski, VP Empire Services





Elk Environmental Services (Elk) was founded in 1988 to provide a needed environmental service. This company provides environmental remediation, emergency response, and waste management services to the mid-Atlantic region. Elk has become known for their expertise and quality of service with locations in Reading and Wysox, Pennsylvania.

"In 2009, I was hired by Elk and given the task of building the Field Services division. I was aware that Elk was known for transportation and disposal services, and I looked forward to being a part of its expansion. Since that time, Elk has worked very hard building a team in waste handling and field service work. The O'Neill brothers have invested in new trucks, specialty equipment, and manpower to make us one of the leaders in the environmental industry. I want to thank all team members and the owners for their trust and vision to grow the company to where we are today. It has been an eventful 15 years, and the future of Empire Group will continue with a vision to succeed." – **Russ Mountjoy**, VP Elk

Originally, Delaware Valley Contractors (DVC) was established in 1990 to supply trucks as support to Empire Services. This changed over the years as DVC became a successful subsidiary on its own merits. Today, DVC is a full-service trucking company, providing transportation of bulk commodities and equipment for contractors and developers. DVC also provides transportation for earth moving operations throughout Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland.



"Delaware Valley Contractors continues to supply excellent service to our customers. Over the past 33 years, I am proud of our commitment to all our customers and the support given to our sister companies. As part of Empire Group, DVC has proven that when working as a team with all the subsidiaries, we all benefit." – **Russ Oswalt**, VP DVC

Berks Transfer was established in 2002 to provide companies and individuals with hauling and waste disposal services. This unique waste processing facility was built to accept over 1,000 tons of waste daily and attracts customers from Eastern Pennsylvania as well as New Jersey and New York. Berks Transfer has proven to be a company that provides excellent service to all their customers, large and small.



Delaware Valley Utility Contractors (DVUC) is the most recent addition to Empire Group subsidiaries. This division was formed in 2011 to provide directional drilling, which causes minimal disruption during underground installation of gas, electric, water and telecommunication lines. Highly trained staff members provide utility installation, emergency utility repairs, vacuum excavation, and certified pipe fusion. DVUC is a fast growing company committed to superior workmanship and outstanding customer service with locations in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Empire Group has changed a great deal since its beginning 70 years ago. "Empire Wrecking was started by my father Harry J. O'Neill, Jr., as a demolition company. Over the years, I have worked alongside my brother Harry III expanding from one company to include several other divisions resulting in Empire Group. I am proud of the current management team, who bring knowledge and talent to our companies. As President, I strive to continue the tradition of providing the best service with the best people." – **Todd O'Neill**, President



Empire Group is headquartered at 1440 Carbon Street, Reading, PA 19601.

For additional information, please call 610-372-6511 or visit www.empiregroupreading.com.



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Pay it Forward Men's Group Visits Venue of Inaugural Giving Back Event

"100 Men of Phoenixville" is a group dedicated to creating a great multi-generational network of civic-minded men interested in improving the Phoenixville community. The goal is to foster camaraderie in the community while supporting charitable causes.

In preparation for their inaugural event on Wednesday, April 2nd from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Phoenixville's Polish American Citizens Club, 328 High Street the steering committee toured the venue. The group is off to a great start with having over a quarter of the members and funds raised already, which is well on their way to their goal of 100 members and \$10,000 raised. Members can nominate non-profits in the Phoenixville community of their choosing. Three charities will be selected at random from among the nominations. One non-profit organization will receive 70 percent of the available grant funds, one will

receive 20 percent of the funds, and the final one will receive 10% of the available grant funds.

The group is expecting at least 100 men to participate with a suggested donation of \$100 each, with a goal of at least \$10,000 raised and given locally. The group is modeled after and inspired by a similar group, "100 Women of Phoenixville", that was established several years ago. Donations are being funneled through the online fundraising site entitled, Grapevine (<https://www.grapevine.org/giving-circle/e7WiRgq/100-Men-of-Phoenixville-PA>).

Pictured (Right to Left) Joseph Scott McArdle, co-founder, Keller Williams Realty; Mark Glowacki, Sr. Director - Tax Group - West Pharmaceutical (Ret.); Louis Beccaria, Beccaria & Associates, LLC; Mike Kelly, K-Three Partners; Robb Frees, Frees Insurance; Bruce McLelland, Applied Video Technology; Michael Howell, Realty One Group Restore. (Not Pictured): Bobby Strunk, co-founder, R. Strunk Funeral Home; Kurt Kunsch, Sr. Vice-President for Wealth Advisory Services - Phoenixville Federal Bank & Trust.



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A huge THANK YOU to everyone who joined us for the 2nd Annual Healthy Women's Conference & Expo on Wednesday at @RiverCrest Golf Club & Preserve. From our inspiring panelists to our amazing attendees and generous sponsors, this event was a true celebration of empowerment, connection, and wellness.

A special shoutout to Title Sponsor - Phoenixville Hospital - Tower Health for their support and to our panelists for sharing their wisdom and experiences. Your contributions made this event unforgettable!

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KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN FIRING AN EMPLOYEE

A number of issues may justify termination of an employee. In some circumstances, a warning, coaching, or amended responsibilities might correct the problem. Depending on the nature of the issue, however, you may find the best course of action is to part ways. Keeping employees on the payroll when they are not measuring up to expectations could thwart your business's growth, create a stressful working environment, and do permanent damage to your reputation.

In most states including Pennsylvania, an employee may be fired "at will" — at any time for any or no reason. However, there are limits and exceptions. For example, federal law prohibits employers from terminating employees for reasons of race, gender, age, religion, or a disability. Nor can you legally fire employees for complaining about illegal activities, health and safety violations, or discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Other exceptions may exist in your state as well.

Documentation is imperative. One must be consistent to document behavior, action, and results. Are there witnesses? Has there been a performance improvement plan developed and communicated to the employee? Make sure to have the employee sign that the plan has been communicated. It is always good to review with an attorney prior to the termination.

If you believe you need — and have legal grounds — to fire an employee, document your reasons, all incidents that demonstrate them, and disciplinary measures (if any) prior to the termination. Having this information on record will give the employee an understanding of your decision, and it can help protect you against any claims of discrimination.

Plan to break the difficult news to the employee in a private setting with a witness present to observe the conversation. If you have concerns about the employee becoming violent, consider having security personnel nearby.

In breaking the news to the employee, one should be straight and to the point. Upon termination, the employee should be escorted to their workstation to collect their possessions and escorted to the exit.

Either during the meeting or in follow-up to it, you are required to inform the employee of eligibility for unemployment and any applicable optional continuation of benefits (such as health insurance). Also, address any entitlement to accrued vacation pay or sick leave, outstanding commissions and bonuses, and not-yet-reimbursed company expenses.

Because of the potential legal ramifications when terminating an employee, make sure you do your research and consider consulting a human resources professional or attorney who can guide you. Also, consider reaching out to your local SCORE chapter to talk with a mentor who can offer input, feedback, and guide you to knowledgeable resources within your community.

Since 1964, SCORE "Mentors to America's Small Business" has helped more than 10 million aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners through mentoring and business workshops. More than 11,000 volunteer business mentors in over 320 chapters serve their communities through entrepreneur education dedicated to the formation, growth and success of small businesses. For more information about starting or operating a small business, contact SCORE TriCounty. You can call 610.327.2673, email tricity@scorevolunteer.org or visit the website at www.tricity.score.org.



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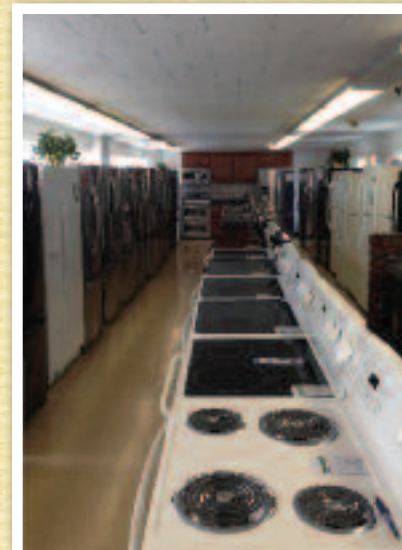
Founded by Oliver Wittenmyer in 1925 as Sanatoga Radio, the company began selling washers and refrigerators

in the 1930s. By the late 1940s the company stopped selling radios and focused exclusively on electrical appliances, eventually changing the company name to Sanatoga Corporation in 1973, when Oliver's son Charles Wittenmyer began running the business.

Today, Sanatoga Appliance is operated by a third generation, Bryan Wittenmyer and his two sisters Karen Harp and Connie Doukas, who took over in 2010. Bryan's son Luke now works at the company representing a fourth generation of Wittenmyers.

"We've seen a lot of competitors come and go," said Bryan Wittenmyer. At one time department stores like Korvettes and Boscov's sold appliances. No longer. Chain stores like Circuit City, Silo's and American Appliance have gone out of business, Wittenmyer explains.





"Oodles of independents have all closed," he said. "Appliances has always been a competitive business. Profit margins are very tight." Today, Sanatoga Appliances main competitors are the box stores like Lowe's and Home Depot.

"A lot of customers just don't want to deal with the box store," Wittenmyer said. "And we are very competitive right there with box stores. In fact, on at least half our orders we're cheaper than the box stores. The box stores are fairly competitive on the front end, but when you add everything into their shopping cart, and all their extra fees, it's quite a bit more," he said. "When you walk in here you get waited on. We still answer our phones. Customer service is a top priority for us. But, the big key to our success is we're a member of a very large buying group that has roughly 250 dealers in the tri-state area. And we can have access to all the brands. They have huge inventory."

Located at 2783 E High St, Pottstown, PA 19464, the Sanatoga Appliance showroom features 300+ new models on display. They carry everything you'd find at a nationwide retail chain, along with a personal touch that turns shopping into a more relaxing experience. They can match or beat other stores prices, but those competitors can't compete with Sanatoga Appliance's expertise, fast delivery, and in-house service team. They truly are the "Appliance Specialists!"

Sanatoga Appliance caters to homeowners, businesses, landlords, builders, remodelers, school districts, house flippers, and senior communities.



Stop and see why Sanatoga Appliance has survived and prospered for decades! If you want a better deal on major home appliances – and to be treated like a neighbor instead of a number – stop by and meet the Sanatoga team today!

Sanatoga Appliance is open Monday through Friday 9:00 AM – 7:00 PM, and Saturday 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

For additional information, please call 610.326.9800 and visit www.SanatogaCorp.com.



Sanatoga has access to all of the brands, including:



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ROUTE 422 Business Advisor

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Joseph Scott McArdle, C.C.I.M.

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GRCA ROUNDUP

GREATER READING CHAMBER ALLIANCE

GRCA

GREATER READING
Chamber Alliance

- 606 Court Street, Reading, PA 19601
- 610.376.6766 • fax 610.376.4135
- info@greaterreading.org
- www.greaterreading.org

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

Essentials of Effective Management: Driving Organizational Results

April 2, 9 16, 23, 30

8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$695/person for GRCA Members
\$895/person for future GRCA Members
WEDnet eligible

Register at
Greaterreading.org/effectivemanagement2025

Non-Profit Workshop: Financial Foundations

April 3

8 a.m. - 10 a.m.

McGlinn Conference Center
460 St. Bernardine St., Reading
\$20/person for GRCA Non-Profit Members
\$30/person for Members of the Association of
Fundraising Professionals, Berks County
\$50/person for future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/nfpworkshop

Unlock the Power of Windows 11 with Copilot AI: Your Ultimate Productivity Assistant

April 10

Noon - 2 p.m.

Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$75/person for GRCA Members
\$95/person for future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/copilot

Practical Project Management Workshop

April 15

8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$250/person for GRCA Members
\$300/person for future GRCA Members
WEDnet eligible
Register at
Greaterreading.org/projectmanagement

Women2Women Conference & Expo

April 16

8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

DoubleTree By Hilton Reading
701 Penn St., Reading
\$115/person, all-day pass for GRCA Members
\$130/person, all-day pass for
future GRCA Members
\$50/person for keynote speaker only
\$50/person for ATHENA Awards & lunch only
Register at Greaterreading.org/expo25

GRCA Executive Leadership Academy: Financial Analysis & Planning for Strategic Leaders

April 23, 30, May 7, 14, 21

1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$1,495/person for GRCA Members
\$1,895/person for future GRCA Members
WEDnet eligible
Register at Greaterreading.org/springELA

Coffee & Convo: Act Bigger, Do More, Move Faster

April 24

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
Free for GRCA members
Register at Greaterreading.org/actbigger

Networking@Night: SeniorLIFE

April 24

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.

SeniorLIFE
20 Shelbourne Road, Reading
Free for GRCA members
Register at Greaterreading.org/seniorlife



FROM GREAT TO Greater

ACCELERATE YOUR BUSINESS GROWTH
WITH A GRCA MEMBERSHIP

REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP



MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- 101 Bill Smith, Blvd King of Prussia, PA 19406
- 610-265-1776 • MontcoChamberPA.org

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, bi-monthly Chat & Chews, 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



*Join The Chamber to celebrate leadership, impact, and community
— reserve your seat now for an unforgettable evening!*

April 24, 2025 5:30 - 8:30 PM at William Penn Inn
LEARN MORE www.MontcoChamberPA.org/events

SWING INTO SUMMER

21ST ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

Network. Play. Grow Your Business.

Monday, June 9th | Shotgun Start at 12PM
The 1912 Club

REGISTER AT -
WWW.MONTCOCHAMBERPA.ORG

ALL ARE WELCOME






152 E. High St., Suite 200, Pottstown, PA 19464 | 610.326.2900 | www.tricountyareachamber.com

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

MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

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

47+ Years

The Hill School

45 Years

Pottstown Area
Rapid Transit, Inc. (PART)

40 Years

Martin Stone Quarries, Inc.

25 Years

A. Jackson Ecker, Inc.

20 Years

Schultz Technology

15 Years

Frederick Living

FASTSIGNS

5 Years

Unleashed Counseling

Nearly 40 New Members in 2025 so far!

AESIR Logistics LLC

(484) 575-1974

Transportation, Trucking /
Common Carriers

Bally Spring Inn

(610) 845-3500

Wedding Consultants / Planners /
Venue, Caterers / Banquet Services

beMarketing

(484) 351-8820

Advertising Agencies

Cosmic Arts Studio

(215) 272-8918

Entertainment

Crystal Cave Company, Inc.

(610) 683-6765

Amusement and Entertainment,
Recreation

D. Eakins Design Group

(610) 420-8529

Advertising Agencies,
Digital Marketing, Marketing /
Market Research

EValuer Solutions

(585) 774-2645

Consultants

First Commonwealth Federal Credit Union

(610) 821-2403

Banks / Credit Unions

Hampton Inn & Suites Kutztown

(484) 641-8800

Hotels / Motels / Bed and Breakfasts

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary

(610) 756-6961

Nonprofit Organizations, Recreation

Hobart's Run

(610) 705-1018

Nonprofit Organizations,
Economic Development

Hope Capital Investments

(267) 966-7421

Property Management

Ivy Rehab

(717) 207-8826

Physical Therapy / Rehabilitation

Ivy Rehab for Kids

(484) 369-8953

Medical Services

Ivy Rehab for Kids – Pottstown

1 (570) 403-6902

Physical Therapy / Rehabilitation

Ivy Rehab Physical Therapy

(484) 624-3096

Physical Therapy / Rehabilitation

Ivy Rehab Physical Therapy Pottstown South/Coventry

(610) 323-4300

Physical Therapy / Rehabilitation

Keystone Window of Pennsylvania

(267) 308-2500

Window / Door Contractors

KJS Electric LLC

(215) 962-1675

Electrical Contractors

Kutztown University - College of Business

(610) 683-4575

Schools / Colleges / Education

Kutztown University Foundation

(610) 683-1513

Nonprofit Organizations

Lantek

(610) 683-6883

Computer Consultants /
Support Services

Lighthouse Leadership Coaching & Development LLC

(484) 347-0515

Coaching - Business / Life

Muhlenberg Greene Architects

(610) 376-4927

Architects / Architectural Services

PA Chamber Insurance, Inc.

(717) 255-3252

Insurance Companies

Panera Bread

(610) 427-8244

Restaurants

Pennsylvania Craftsmen Construction Company

(484) 300-2987

Building Contractors

PenTeleData

(610) 826-9379

Internet Services

Primerica - Samuel A. Yoder

(610) 442-8209

Financial Services,
Insurance Companies

RE/MAX 440 - Katie Kober, REALTOR®

(484) 221-2689

Real Estate - Residential

Reading Regional Airport

(610) 372-4666

Airports

Renninger's Farmers, Flea, and Antique Mart

(610) 683-6848

Farmers Markets / Food Markets,
Antiques

Security Service Company

(610) 398-2500

Burglar and Fire Alarms / Security
Systems, Security Services

Shaynah Kinner Day Care Center

(610) 683-5040

Day Care Providers - Child

Stoney Creek Rentals, Inc.

(610) 926-4567

Equipment Rental and Leasing,
Construction Equipment Sales /
Services

Twin Ponds Golf Club

(610) 223-1993

Golf Courses

Valhalla Esports Training (Royersford)

(610) 200-5145

Youth Services

Voda Cleaning & Restoration

(215) 881-0300

Cleaning Contractors, Fire /
Water Restoration



#tcaccbettertogether

REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP

TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce

2025 Annual Dinner

Thursday, April 24th
5:00 PM - 8:30 PM

RiverCrest Golf Club & Preserve
100 Golf Club Dr., Phoenixville, PA 19460

Don't underestimate the power of a single moment—
this could be your Lollipop Moment!

The Event Will Feature:

- Cocktail, networking reception
- Hors d'oeuvres
- Awards
- Dinner
- Dessert reception
- Amazing gift basket raffle

Pricing:

- Members: \$130
- Non-Member: \$220
- Members Table of 10: \$1000

Keynote Speaker:

Drew Dudley

Founder of Day One Leadership
and renowned TEDx speaker
behind Everyday Leadership.



Drew's engaging approach redefines leadership, showing how small actions can create a lasting impact—what he calls "Lollipop Moments." His insights will empower you to recognize and embrace your own leadership potential in everyday interactions, both personally and professionally.



Join us for a night of connection, inspiration, and the opportunity to unlock your own leadership potential.

Call 610.326.2900 or email alice@tricountyareachamber.com.
Scan the QR Code to register or visit tricountyareachamber.com.
Sponsorships are available!



ANNUAL SUMMIT

Tuesday, May 6th

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

SPRING HOLLOW GOLF CLUB
3350 SCHUYLKILL RD., SPRING CITY, PA 19475

\$75 PER YOUNG PROFESSIONAL
\$390 FOR A TABLE OF 6

Registration includes:

- Buffet breakfast
- 3 dynamic speakers presenting important and engaging topics
- Professional Headshot taken by Dylan Eddinger Photography
- Learning activities
- Snack bar
- Time for networking
- Opportunity to meet fellow young professionals
- Chance to win door prizes!
- Copy of Never Ever Ever Give Up by Jay Sidhu



Scan the QR Code to learn more and to register. Please call 610.326.2900 with any questions or email halley@tricountyareachamber.com.

THE SPEAKER LINEUP

Breaking Barriers - Making Goals You Can Accomplish



Navixha Bagga
OHL Consulting by Navixha

Never Ever Ever Give Up



Jay Sidhu
Executive Chairman of Customers Bank

Sharing Your Potential and Giving Back to the Community



Tonya Petrunak
Executive Director of Marketing and Relationship Services Reading Fightin' Rhinos

Thank you to our sponsors:



BUSINESS SUMMIT

Tuesday, May 20th

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN POTTSTOWN
NORTH HALL, 2ND FLOOR GALLERY

\$75 PER MEMBER
\$125 PER NON-MEMBER

Chamber Members should attend this half day conference for the classes we'll provide on Human Resources, AI, etc. because it will provide an opportunity to hear from influential leaders and HR implementors. You'll learn from experts and network with top industry leaders and discover the solutions tailored to organizational challenges you face.

Sponsorship opportunities are available!



Scan the QR Code to learn more and to register. Please call 610.326.2900 with any questions.

THE SPEAKER LINEUP

AI - How it can best help you



Rachael Wolfe

Director of Digital Media Strategy & Leadership
Development of the Small Business Development Center at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

Managing Performance Through Honest and Timely Feedback



Tiffany Blauert

HR Professional and Director of HR Teammate

Networking & Collaborating



Stephanie Ziegler

Business Relationship Officer at Diamond Credit Union

Attract & Retain Upscale Talent



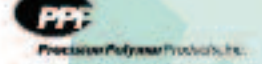
Megan Keough

Lead HR Advisor of Workpace Harmony

VISIONARY

TriCounty HEALTH PLANS

STAKEHOLDER



BUILDING COMMUNITIES



CREATING CONNECTIONS



REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP

PHOENIXVILLE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



- **Future headquarters:**
710 Main St., Phoenixville, PA 19460
- 610.933.3070
- fax 610.917.0503
- info@phoenixvillechamber.org
- www.phoenixvillechamber.org

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."

Visit our events page for details on these events and 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.net

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

KarMar Realty Group, Inc.

Commercial and investment real estate firm
Justin Soss (610) 256-0368
www.karmarrealty.com

T's Trees & Trimming

Commercial and residential tree services
Tyler Pieragostini (484) 477-8600
www.tsreesntrimming.com

Western & Southern Life

Life and Disability Insurances, Long Term Care, Fixed Annuities
Ana Buhezo (610) 908-9809

Nihart Photography

Family and Professional Photography Services
Sharon Nihart (484) 300-8745
www.nihartphotography.com

PV Perks Discount Cards Are Here!

Enjoy discounts at 13 fantastic local restaurants, retailers and service providers —every time you visit, now through June 30, 2025. Great for gifting clients or thanking employees!

Featured Businesses: Copperfield Inn at Lakeside, HARVEST Seasonal, Ember + Ale, Pizza Stop, Jersey Mike's Subs, Alex Blom Creates, Animal Medical Center, Marco Motors, Nashcards, Michelle's Jewelry Studio, The Grand Fromage, Too Cool Apparel, and Wehrung's.

Order now at www.PVChamber.net. Available for pickup or delivery via USPS. Don't wait - get yours before they're gone!

POST-EVENT: PV Win 2nd Annual Healthy Women's Conference & Expo – See page 23

UPCOMING EVENTS

Indulge in an evening of fine wine, exquisite food, and great company at our Wine Pairing & Dinner event. This intimate gathering offers a curated dining experience, where each course is expertly paired with a complementary wine selection and presented by the chef or wine connoisseur. Reserve your seat: www.PVChamber.net

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!



We're excited to launch **PV Next Gen**, a program to empower young professionals ages 22-40. Join us for PV Next Gen's Inaugural Happy Hour on Thursday, April 10th at Troubles End Brewing. Sign up at www.PVchamber.net

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!



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!

Visit us online at www.springfordchamber.com

to explore the new features and opportunities available to you. Join us in our mission to drive progress and prosperity in our community. Reach out to mileva@springfordchamber.com for more information on membership benefits and how to join. Let's grow together!

Woman IN NETWORKING

Friday, April 4th, 2025

Friday, May 2nd, 2025

Friday, June 6th, 2025

Friday, August 1st, 2025

Limerick Township Building
646 W. Ridge Pike, Limerick, PA 19468

AT 8 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!

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
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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 continue our thriving- Spring-Ford Chamber Business Connect! This event is held every Tuesday at the Sunshine Café. Interested in speaking? Reach out to us at mileva@springfordchamber.com

Join Us for Our Spring Lunch and Learn!

We're so excited to be celebrating once again with an **inspiring and engaging luncheon** hosted by the **Spring-Ford Chamber of Commerce!** **Date:** Wednesday, May 14, 2025 **Time:** 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM **Location:** Copperfield Inn, 594 W Ridge Pike, Limerick, PA 19468

Enjoy a **delicious lunch** while networking with fellow professionals and gaining **valuable insights** from our **guest speakers, Dan Kerr the Township Manager at Limerick Township, Tim Tieperman the Township Manager at Upper Providence and Tom DiBello, Montgomery County Commission!** Don't miss this fantastic opportunity to connect, learn, and welcome the new season together! **Tickets are \$40** and available now on our website! Secure your spot today! We look forward to seeing you there!

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Ticket Price: \$35

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GUEST RETENTION – BASED ON WHAT YOU DO OR DON'T DO



By Gary Seibert, CEO,
Small Business Resource Association

The keys to Guest Retention are transparency, authenticity, accountability, “great” service not “good” service, customer awareness, consistency among staff, willingness to go beyond what is expected, hiring the right people, being creative, making guest feel special, providing a fun, safe and happy environment, loyalty, outrageous experience, engagement, trust, understanding your guests needs and whatever else you want to throw into the mix to give the guest an experience like no other.

Repeat business is not only important, it is necessary for many businesses to survive. As the inventory of **NEW GUESTS** (customers) diminishes while the retention of old guests declines, the end result is obvious—not enough business to pay the bills and eventually, closure.

Take a hard look at your surrounding community and how many businesses are no longer there. Some were around for decades and some for less than a year. Regardless of how long the closures were in business, they all failed to pay attention to the real needs of their customers.

The first paragraph looks like a lot of hard work, and for many it may be. However, it’s what successful owners do in order to grow and sustain their businesses.

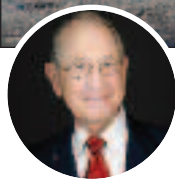
Here are some incredible quotes that reinforce the above. How many of these are you doing?

1. “Customer satisfaction is worthless (satisfactory) but Guest loyalty is priceless.” – Jeffrey Gitomer
2. “Do what you do so well that they will want to experience it again and bring their friends.” – Walt Disney
3. “The more you engage with your guest the clearer things become and the easier it is to determine what you should be doing.” – John Russell
4. “Have you ever thought of the difference it could make if you focused on guest retention as your primary way of measuring and maintaining your customer base?” – Fred Reichheld
5. “Your customer does not care how much you know until they know how much you care.” – Damon Richards
6. “You don’t earn loyalty in a day. You earn loyalty day-by-day.” – Jeffrey Gitomer
7. “Repeat business or behavior can be bribed. Loyalty has to be earned.” – Janet Robinson
8. “If you’re not serving the customer, your job is to be serving the one who is.” – Unknown
9. “Satisfaction is a rating whereas loyalty is a Brand.” – Shep Hyken
10. “The ultimate goal of providing great Guest services is to know and understand the guest so well that your products and services fit them so well that they sell themselves.” – Unknown



Take the list in paragraph one, along with the quotes, and highlight every one of these items you are currently doing. Then, take all the rest and figure out what you need to do in order to become greater than great in the eyes of your guests. By doing this, old guests (retained guests), will bring new guests and together your business will turn from surviving to thriving.

SBRA Business Spotlight



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CREATING A THRIVING WORKPLACE –

WHY OFFERING EMPLOYEE BENEFITS IS ADVANTAGEOUS TO YOUR BUSINESS



By Todd Klinger, Integrity Services & Solutions

In today's competitive job market, attracting and retaining top talent is crucial for business success. While salary remains a significant factor, offering comprehensive employee benefits has become increasingly important for organizations looking to stand out. Employee benefits go beyond the paycheck, helping to create a more motivated, engaged, and loyal workforce. Here's why offering employee benefits is not just a perk, but a strategic advantage to your business.

1. Attracting Top Talent

When job seekers are evaluating potential employers, salary is only one piece of the puzzle. Comprehensive employee benefits packages can set your company apart from competitors. Offering benefits like health insurance, retirement plans, ancillary plans, and wellness programs can make your business more attractive to high-quality candidates. Top-tier talent often looks for more than just a paycheck—they seek jobs that offer security and work-life balance. By offering competitive benefits, your company can entice skilled professionals who are looking for more than just financial compensation.

2. Improved Employee Retention

Employee turnover is costly for businesses, not only in terms of recruitment but also in training new employees and lost productivity. One of the most effective ways to increase employee retention is through robust benefits packages. When employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to remain loyal to the company. Benefits such as health coverage, retirement plans, and ancillary plans contribute to a sense of financial security, making employees less likely to leave for a competitor. Additionally, programs that focus on professional development and career growth foster a long-term commitment.

3. Boosting Employee Morale and Productivity

Employee benefits help improve job satisfaction, leading to higher morale and motivation. When employees feel that their health, well-being, and personal needs are being considered, they are

more likely to be engaged in their work. For instance, wellness programs and mental health support services can reduce stress and burnout, allowing employees to perform at their best. Additionally, offering flexible work schedules or remote work options can create a better work-life balance, leading to higher productivity. Happy employees are more committed, which translates directly into improved business outcomes.

4. Cost Savings and Tax Benefits

While offering benefits may seem like an additional expense, many of them come with tax advantages for your business. For example, contributions to employee retirement plans are often tax-deductible, reducing your company's overall taxable income. Health insurance premiums can also be deducted as a business expense. Moreover, certain employee benefits, such as Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) or Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs), can help reduce payroll taxes.

By offering benefits in a strategic way, you can take advantage of these financial incentives while still providing valuable support to your employees.

5. Fostering a Positive Company Culture

A strong benefits package signals to employees that the company cares about their well-being, which fosters a positive, inclusive, and supportive culture. When employees feel supported, they are more likely to contribute to a collaborative and high-performing environment. A positive workplace culture can have a ripple effect, improving employee engagement, morale, and overall job satisfaction. This, in turn, boosts your business's reputation and helps you build a brand that attracts both clients and top talent.

Incorporating employee benefits into your business model is not just a strategy to stay competitive in the job market—it's an investment in your workforce. By offering attractive benefits, you improve employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity, all of which directly contribute to the success of your business. Beyond the financial perks, employee benefits build a strong, loyal, and engaged team that can drive long-term growth and success. In today's business landscape, offering benefits is no longer just a good idea—it's a smart business decision.

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RESUMETEMPLATES.COM SURVEY

1 IN 5 U.S. WORKERS FEAR LAYOFFS IN 2025

Workers are updating resumes, seeking extra income, and cutting spending amid layoff fears

With economic uncertainty mounting, U.S. workers are increasingly concerned about job security, with some already taking proactive steps to safeguard their careers and finances. A new survey from ResumeTemplates, conducted in March 2025 reveals that 1 in 5 employees fear they will be laid off this year, while 6 in 10 believe the U.S. will enter a recession within the next 12 months.

Workers Brace for Layoffs, Update Resumes, and Seek Extra Income

The study highlights growing financial anxieties as 1 in 3 workers report that their employer has already implemented cost-cutting measures, such as hiring freezes (34%), layoffs (24%), and frozen raises or bonuses (20%). Employees who are worried about job loss are taking action to improve their financial stability:

- 55% say they are making extra efforts at their current job to prove their value, and 26% plan to start soon
- 49% have recently updated their resumes, and 47% plan to do so soon
- 32% are already earning extra income through a side hustle or second job, and 55% plan to start one

"If you believe you're going to be laid off, the best thing you can do is start reaching out to your network," says ResumeTemplates' Chief Career Strategist, Julia Toothacre. "Ideally, you should connect with people before you need something, so outreach doesn't feel transactional. Updating your resume with key accomplishments now will also save you stress later."

9 in 10 Workers Would Return to the Office 5 Days per Week to Avoid Layoffs

As employers tighten budgets, workers are willing to make significant sacrifices to keep their jobs. A staggering 89% of employees say they would comply with a five-day in-office schedule if it meant avoiding a layoff. Other compromises workers are willing to make include:

- 80% would work weekends
- 74% would forgo time off
- 63% would switch to part-time or freelance work

"With many companies using return-to-office (RTO) policies as a justification for layoffs, in-office visibility is more critical than ever," says Toothacre. "If you're worried about job security, now is the time to have an open discussion with your manager about potential layoffs and what concessions might help you keep your position."

2 in 3 Workers Have Cut Spending Due to Job Security Fears

Concerns about potential job loss are already affecting workers' financial and personal decisions. Two-thirds (67%) have reduced their spending in the past two months, while 1 in 4 (25%) have delayed major life events like buying a home, having a baby, or pursuing further education.

If they were to lose their jobs, workers say they would be most concerned about losing healthcare benefits, mental health impacts, and finding a new job.

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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.

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.pottstownscore.org.

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PREPARING FOR YOUR BEST FUTURE, NO MATTER THE WORKFORCE CLIMATE



By Lana Potgieter,
Lighthouse Leadership

According to the latest LinkedIn Workforce Confidence Survey, American workers confidence to find or hold a job is the lowest it's been since the survey began in Spring 2020, when the pandemic rocked the economy.

Lighthouse Leadership Coaching and Development (LLCD) understands that the future can be uncertain. As we navigate a challenging job market, we recommend that key players focus on the following strategies to safeguard the future of their careers.

1. Your most valuable asset is you. Focus on growth, continuous learning, and seeking results that advance you beyond your current position.
2. Sometimes, the biggest challenges can lead to the greatest rewards. Consult "We Got Fired! ... And It's the Best Thing That Ever Happened to Us" - Harvey Mackay
3. Remember, you work at a business, not for it. Your career should align with your personal values and long-term goals.
4. Don't settle for just any job. Reflect on what your ideal job looks like and plan the steps to get there — taking actionable steps each day.
5. Always be proactive in developing new skills, behaviors, and attitudes that prepare you for new opportunities.

LLCD can help by transforming individuals into leaders that others are inspired to follow — while also empowering their team members to become self-motivated and ambitious. Through Leadership Development, Executive Coaching, Career Development, and Business Consulting, LLCD guides business owners, senior executives, and teams toward greater personal and professional growth.

Our transformative coaching experience is grounded in neuroscience, addressing the physiology and psychology behind human behavior and performance. LLT uses measurable data collected from comprehensive personal interviews to establish a baseline of team dynamics, individual habits, and the necessary steps for achieving results.

LLCD clients walk away with renewed goals, clear direction, and a deeper sense of purpose. They gain the ability to grow beyond their current limits by shifting their mindset, elevating their thoughts, and setting higher goals.

Lana Potgieter is an internationally acclaimed leadership coach and business strategist who specializes in empowering business owners and executive teams within small to mid-sized organizations.

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AN UPDATE ON THE FTC'S BAN ON EMPLOYEE NON-COMPETES



LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

By Bruce L. Baldwin,
Esquire, Wolf,
Baldwin &
Associates, P.C.

In this column in February of 2023, we alerted our readers to the proposed rulemaking of the Federal Trade Commission ("FTC"), which threatened to ban the enforcement of employee non-competes nationwide. Nearly a year and a half later, after review and a public-comment period, the FTC finally acted.

As we reported in August 2024, on April 23, 2024, the FTC announced its decision. By a vote of 3-2, the Commission banned the enforcement of post-employment non-competes nationwide, declaring them to be unfair methods of competition.

As we also wrote in 2023, employee non-compete clauses — contractual covenants which restrict an employee's right to work for a competitor after the end of the contracted employment — have been around for many decades. They have become part of the fabric of employment in America. All regulation of non-competes has historically been at the state level, with only California, North Dakota, and Oklahoma having near-blanket bans.

Employers view non-competes as critical protections for processes, techniques, pricing structures, customer details and other pieces of an employer's business that an employee might have stored in his or her head, but that might not strictly qualify as trade secrets. Often this information has taken the employer many years to develop. Without non-competes, what is to prevent the employee from giving all of that information to any new employer who offers an increase in pay in exchange for that information?

On the other hand, employees see these covenants as unfair impediments to earning a livelihood elsewhere if a particular job does not work out, even when the employee is fired or laid off from that job. Why should it be that an employer can use a non-compete to prevent a worker from selling his only talents to another employer, thereby effectively either forcing that employee into unemployment or trapping that employee into forever working for that one employer? This so-called "non-compete trap" keeps wages low and has been estimated to cost the country 8,500 new startups each year — i.e., companies that would have been formed but for these bans on competition.

The new FTC rule, which was scheduled to go into effect on September 4, 2024, was set to prohibit employers from entering into new non-competes or enforcing existing non-competes against employees, with exceptions only for "senior executives." The rule defines "senior executive" as a worker who (1) earns more than \$151,164 per year and (2) is in a "policy-making position" for the employer. A "policy-making position" is defined as a company president, chief executive officer or the equivalent or anyone who has "policy-making authority," which is in turn defined as final authority to make policy decisions that control significant aspects of a business entity.

As we also reported in August of 2024, the new rule was already the subject of multiple legal challenges, including a lawsuit filed by the United States Chamber of Commerce. As many had predicted, some of those challenges have succeeded. On August 20, 2024, in the case of *Ryan, LLC v. Federal Trade Commission*, the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas struck down the non-compete ban on a nationwide basis.

(Continued on page 42)

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LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

(Continued from page 41)

The court found that the FTC exceeded its statutory authority to regulate commerce when it issued the non-compete ban. The FTC has appealed this nationwide injunction to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which is widely viewed as a business-friendly court likely to uphold the nationwide ban. But for now, there is no FTC ban on non-competes.

In another challenge to the FTC rule filed in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida in the case of *Properties of the Villages, Inc. v. Federal Trade Commission*, the court issued a preliminary injunction against the non-compete ban, holding that there was insufficiently clear Congressional authorization for the FTC to issue a rule with the extraordinary economic and political impact of a near-blanket prohibition on employment-related non-competes. The FTC has appealed this decision to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit.

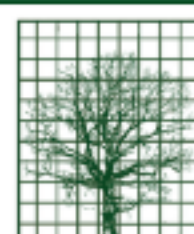
In the case of *ATS Tree Services, LLC v. Federal Trade Commission*, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania found that the FTC non-compete ban was likely to be ultimately found valid, and so that court declined to

enjoin enforcement of the FTC rule. However, with the nationwide ban of the rule issued by the Texas court, the *ATS Tree Services* case was of little effect. The plaintiff has since dropped the case, perhaps not feeling a need to pursue the matter further in light of the Texas and Florida decisions.

Although conflicting decisions in different federal circuit courts might ultimately provide a basis for the United States Supreme Court to decide the validity of the FTC non-compete ban, the reality is that there will likely be no reason for the Supreme Court to review the FTC rule at all. Here it must be recalled that the FTC rule against employment-based non-competes was issued by former President Biden's FTC. Now that the more business-friendly Trump administration has appointed a new FTC chair, it is more likely that the FTC will withdraw the FTC rule against non-competes before the case ever gets to the Supreme Court. If so, that will be the end of the FTC rule.

Stay tuned.

Bruce L. Baldwin, Esquire is a partner in the law firm of Wolf, Baldwin and Associates, P.C., with offices in Pottstown, Pennsburg, West Chester, and Reading, and has represented employers and employees in business matters and litigation for over 30 years. He may be reached by calling 610.323.7436, or by e-mail at BBaldwin@wolfbaldwin.com.



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Kantner's service team consists of the following additional team members: Rodney Hollenbach, Dustin Kistler, Dustin Kunkle, Andrew Fry, Kyle Grynastyl, Kevin Angstadt, John Molnar, and Heidi Roberts (Troy's wife).

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Three Ways to Jumpstart Your Fitness This Spring

Spring is here, and that means longer days, warmer weather, and the perfect time to kick your fitness into high gear. Whether your goal is to feel great, build strength, or get summer-ready, NOW is the time to take action. Here's how to get started:

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2. Focus on Consistency Over Intensity: Too many people go all-in for a few weeks, only to burn out. The key to success? Start small and stay consistent. Aim for at least **3-4 workouts per week**, incorporating strength, cardio, and flexibility training. Not sure where to start? A structured, personalized program—like those offered by GYMGUYZ — keeps you on track and progressing safely.



3. Fuel Your Body for Results: Exercise alone won't get you where you want to be — what you eat matters too. Spring is the perfect time to reset your nutrition by adding fresh, seasonal foods like greens, berries, and lean proteins. Hydration is also key, so start increasing your water intake now to keep energy levels high.

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MIXED NEWS FOR PENNSYLVANIA HIGHWAYS

By Lauren Jessop,
The Center Square Contributor

Congestion, structurally deficient bridges and pavement conditions are key factors contributing to Pennsylvania's low ranking among the nation's highways, a new report says.

There is, however, a mixture of both good and bad news for the commonwealth.

Despite ranking in the bottom 26 percent, it was one of only 21 states to make progress, albeit slightly, moving from 41st last year to 37th overall.

The Reason Foundation's 28th Annual Highway Report evaluates the condition and cost-effectiveness of state-controlled highways across 13 categories. The data used in the report primarily comes from information each state submitted to the Federal Highway Administration for 2022, the most recent year with complete data available.

The state's most significant improvements from the previous report were 'other disbursements,' rising from 43rd to 33rd, and 'other fatality rate' went

from 35th to 25th. Additionally, the rural fatality rate ranked 12th while the urban fatality rate stood at 20th.

Although ranking 17th in capital and bridge disbursements — the costs of building new roads and bridges and widening existing ones — it came in 31st and 37th for administrative disbursements and maintenance spending respectively.

Ranking for the state's bridges also improved slightly.

Baruch Feigenbaum, lead author of the report, and senior managing director of transportation policy at Reason Foundation told The Center Square that Pennsylvania's 45th ranking in this category might not seem very good, but it used to be 50th.

The ranking has potential for more improvement in the next report, as PennDOT has reported repairing or replacing more than 200 bridges between 2023 and 2024. In 2024, the Shapiro administration had 300 bridge projects underway.

Congestion is Pennsylvania's next lowest ranking, and the one with the most significant decline — from 32nd to 42nd.

(Continued on page 48)

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PENNSYLVANIA HIGHWAYS

(Continued from page 47)

Feigenbaum said that after bridges, it's a matter of working on traffic congestion, pavement, and perhaps developing a quantitative cost benefit analysis tool which helps prioritize projects. States like Virginia and North Carolina tend to rank significantly higher because they're doing the projects that are the most needed, he said.

He noted Pennsylvania ranked in the 30s in all four pavement condition categories:

- 39th in urban Interstate pavement
- 37th in rural Interstate pavement
- 37th in urban arterial pavement
- 31st in rural arterial pavement

Georgia is ranked 6th overall, with its lowest ranking being 14 in the four pavement categories. Feigenbaum noted that Georgia has a specialized unit overseeing pavement contractors. Through various strategies — including incentives to complete work quickly — they consistently finish their projects in under a year, making it a good model for other states to consider.

He also said improving mass transportation would help — something

the Shapiro administration hopes to address with increased funding in his 2025-26 budget and beyond.

Overall, compared to similarly populated states, the commonwealth ranks ahead of 45th-ranked New York, but worse than Illinois at 36th.

Terrain, climate, truck volumes, urbanization, system age, budget priorities, unit cost differences, state budget circumstances, and management/maintenance philosophies are factors that affect the report's overall performance.

Similar to last year, the report says, the top-performing states are a mix of large and small, and urban and rural. Five states with large populations of more than seven million people placed in the top 10 overall rankings.

North Carolina is the No. 1 state, followed by South Carolina, North Dakota, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Minnesota, Utah, Missouri, and Ohio.

The 10 lowest-ranked states are Delaware, Rhode Island, Colorado, Vermont, New York, Louisiana, Washington, Hawaii, California, with Alaska finishing at the bottom and ranked 50th.

TURMOIL IN GRANT WORLD



DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

By Barry Cassidy

These are interesting times if you make your money providing public finance, like I do. I have an EPA Environmental Justice application pending. It is a good application, but you never know if they want to review all applications over \$50,000; mine is \$150,000. If we get the money, it will mean we met the Trump criteria.

How can I shepherd it through? I need to wait.

The upheaval creates opportunities, as I noted in a previous article (January 2025 issue) about agencies being eliminated. Reagan did much of the same. His programs were relatively straightforward.

I worked as a temporary worker for the PA Department of Labor and Industry when I was already accepted to the Carnegie Mellon School of Urban and Public Affairs (SUPA). I needed someone to lay me off to collect unemployment while I went to school.

Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel had two facilities at the time, one in Monessen and one in Allenport in the Monongahela Valley (Mon Valley). The Japanese had dumped steel exports, leaving everyone in Pittsburgh unemployed.

A trade complaint occurred, and the federal government paid trade readjustment assistance (TRA) to affected people. They were also entitled to TAA, which was companion job training.

In all this upheaval, I saw the head of

the Auto Union stand up and say he was for the tariff as it would bring auto jobs back to Detroit. Since 2008, the auto industry has not been pretty. A comeback for the auto workers made me think of the steelworkers I processed in the 1980s.

This was the aftermath of Jimmy Carter, and I started to wonder if it would have made a difference when it became apparent that someone was trying to destroy our manufacturing base. If he had acted like Trump, would that industry collapse as it did? They were retooling by installing a state-of-the-art continuous caster, which was underused and abandoned.

We import significantly more to many of these countries, and they strive to maintain their own industries. Therefore, when they impose reciprocal tariffs, there isn't much to reciprocate with.

The fall of the steel industry saw their work become intermittent. Workers would work a week and then be off for two weeks, and they had to come into the office. Combine that with Corning Glass working 15-hour weeks, and it got pretty crowded in the Charleroi office.

Here is a clear example of how things can look one way but be something else entirely. So, the year before, the steelworkers were out of work, totally laid off for a little over a year. Unemployment was awarded for 26 weeks. A federal program called Extended Benefits, which added an additional 10 weeks, allowed you to collect your benefits. Then, afterward, two 13-week extensions were added, which meant that in a 52-week year, you could collect unemployment for 62 weeks.

(Continued on page 50)

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DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from page 49)

Then, they announced the trade readjustment program and told people they were eligible to collect a year's worth of benefits. So, they all came back, and the program was different; instead of the last four digits of the social security number, the first three were used. Everyone was local and had the same first three digits because that was the area identifier for where the number was given.

It was a significant administrative hassle looking for the middle set of numbers, and all existing records were the last four. So, nothing coincided, and we had to open claims for everyone without real cross-references for anything we did.

There were weeks of angry, laid-off men signing up, giving birth to a new documentation set. Then we found that the money was for the year; they had collected 62 weeks in a 52-week year. So, no one got anything, except we generated a boatload of administrative dollars and paid my salary.

Big announcements and no real value. I accomplished my goal and got laid off.

My point here is that no matter what you read or what is announced, you have to take it with a grain of salt. Some

people call it government red tape; I call it nonsense.

I go to some of these grant meetings and see that people do not have a good project; they are salary prospecting. Things needed to change, and it seems like they are. I do not like not getting money, but I can certainly appreciate their effort.

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

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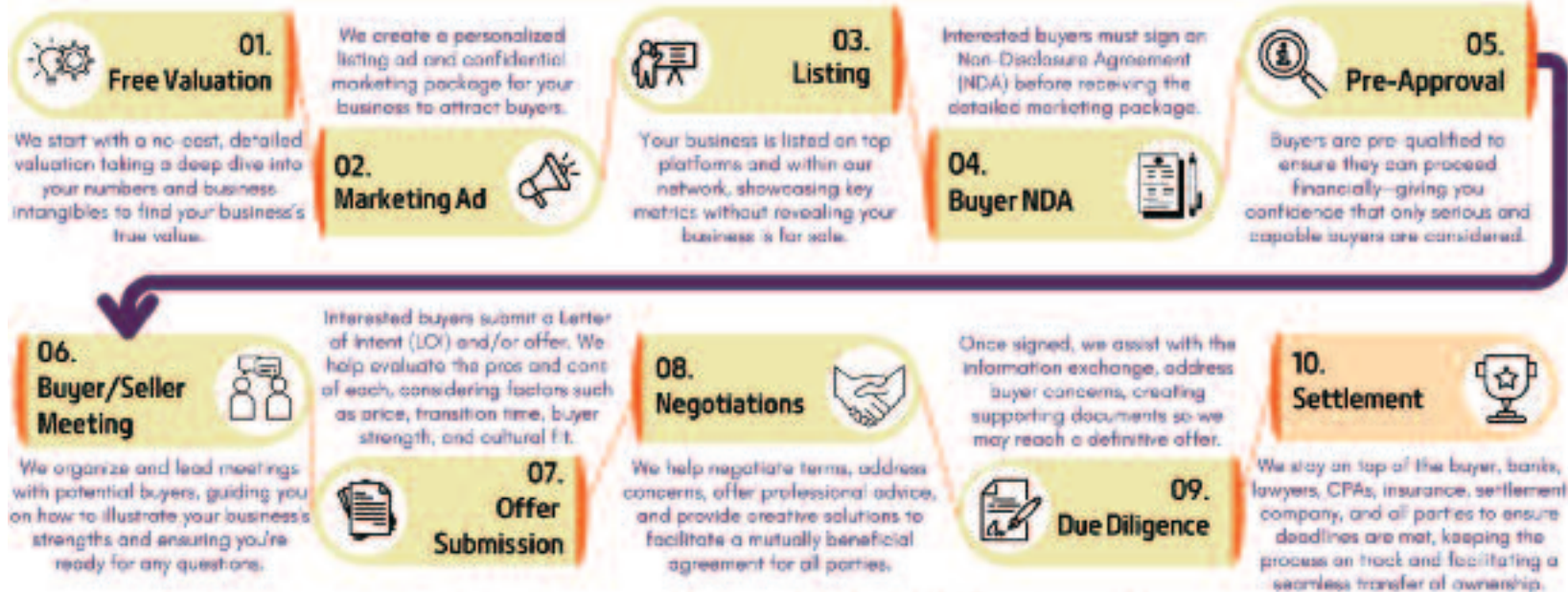
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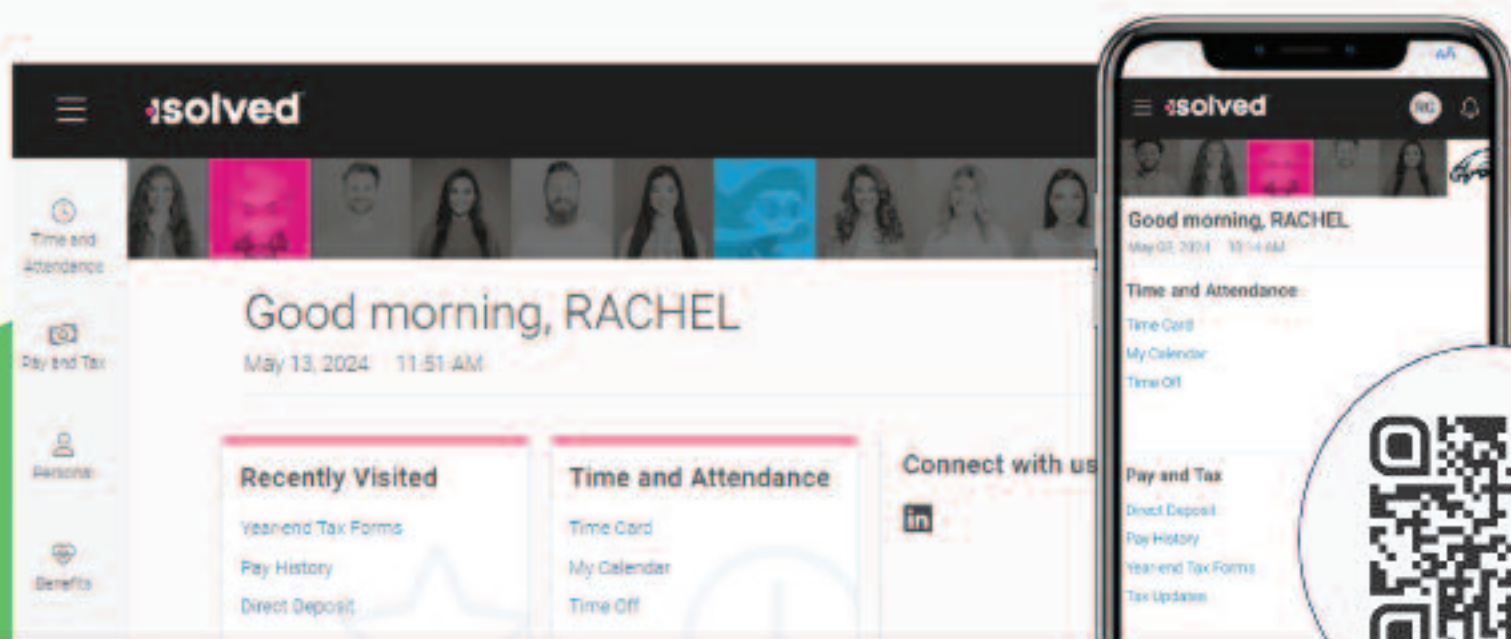
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