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Cover Story: Celebrating 55 years of exceptional service, Birdsboro, PA-headquartered CJ's Tire and Auto keeps drivers road-trip-ready with trusted repairs, tire expertise, flexible financing, and a growing regional presence grounded in family ownership and community commitment.



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55 YEARS OF EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE

CJ's TIRE & AUTO



By Kathy Hunt

Relieved to see the end of winter? You can bet that your car or truck is, too. Snow, ice, salt, and arctic temperatures have all taken a toll on vehicles. Cavernous potholes jarred wheels out of alignment. Sleet and snow dulled wiper blades. Below-freezing temperatures cracked belts, gaskets, and even tires. At this point, automobiles are crying out for some seasonal TLC.



PHOTOS BY STEVE LAONER PHOTOGRAPHY

Fortunately, CJ's Tire and Auto has the skills, parts, and service to return cars and trucks to their safe, roadworthy selves. From replacing wiper blades, batteries, and brakes to aligning wheels and balancing and repairing or replacing tires, independently-owned CJ's Tire and Auto "keeps things moving" for vehicles and their operators.

Founder Paul "Skip" Levensgood Sr. opened C & J Tire, as it was then called, in 1971, in Birdsboro, Berks County. Fifty-five years later, the business has become Southeastern Pennsylvania's leading tire distributor. Today, CJ's Tires and Auto has 19 retail locations and 11 wholesale distribution centers in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. In January 2026, it opened its newest retail center on the edge of Harrisburg, in Colonial Park, PA.

In addition to its new retail center, CJ's recently remodeled and repurposed Levensgood's childhood home, a 20th-century Cape Cod adjacent to the Birdsboro corporate headquarters (91 Ben Franklin Highway West, Birdsboro). A portion of CJ's sales and purchasing departments have moved their offices into the refurbished building.

Since Skip Levensgood's retirement, his son Paul oversees the day-to-day operations at CJ's. Grandson Haley focuses on pricing and product information.

Exceptional customer service is key

When Levensgood Sr. started his business, his goal was to provide exceptional customer service to individual and commercial customers. More than five decades later, this remains the company's mission.

Every CJ's retail location features trained mechanics who can address general car maintenance such as tune-ups and inspections, as well as more serious concerns, such as steering and suspension problems and brake repairs.

No matter which site customers visit, they can be assured that the sales staff understands the latest automotive and tire technology and can advise them on the best choices for their vehicles. All CJ's centers maintain a well-stocked inventory and have easy access to one of the company's 11 distribution centers.

Leanne Bolger, director of marketing for CJ's, said that the business continues to expand its wholesale market to better serve its customers. In an effort to reach and offer its services to more people, it is also continuing to grow its retail presence. "We're just getting started," she said.



Recently, CJ's added a new scheduling tool to its website (cjtire.com), one guaranteed to enhance customer experience even more. Previously, after emailing or calling to set up an appointment, customers had to wait for a CJ's staff member to respond to their requests. The new scheduling tool allows consumers to book an appointment online in minutes.

The company's efforts have not gone unnoticed. In January, *Berks County Living* announced the "People's Choice Who's Who in Business Award" for 2026. CJ's Tire and Automotive won for best oil change and lube as well as for best tire dealer. On the website businessrate.com, CJ's ranks as the top tire shop in Leesport and Pottstown for 2025. BusinessRate bases its ratings on Google reviews.

Flexible financing for auto service and tires

Another way that CJ's shows its commitment to outstanding customer service is in how it approaches payment for services and goods. The company understands

how challenging the unexpected expense of vehicle parts and repairs can be. With its customers' wallets in mind, it has set up several flexible payment options.

Leases and loans are two such methods. Through Koalafi, customers can apply for 12 months of financing. This lease-to-own financing service accepts customers with any credit score — good, bad, or none — and tailors payment plans to fit the customer's financial position. Another financing choice is Affirm, the largest, U.S.-based, buy-now and pay-later loan service. Here, customers select a payment schedule of either four installments made every two weeks or monthly payments with interest.

Customers can also use their PayPal accounts for purchases or apply for a credit card with Goodyear/The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Bridgestone and Firestone, and Continental and General Tires. Whatever works best for the customer works for CJ's.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Individual consumers receive Loyalty Rewards

Yet another example of the business supporting its customers is its consumer-focused Loyalty Rewards program. Clients earn points on every dollar spent at CJ's. Accrued points can be applied to anything sold at retail sites, including tires and service. The Loyalty Rewards program includes monthly promotional deals, such as \$10 off a car inspection or special tire financing, and a free enrollment bonus. When customers sign up, either online or in a CJ's store, for Loyalty Rewards, they automatically earn five dollars-worth of points.

Customers should remember that Loyalty Rewards points can only be used on future purchases. They are not redeemable for cash. Commercial, fleet, and government vehicles are excluded from this particular loyalty program. They are instead covered by CJ's Commercial Advantage Program.

Aiding business owners with CJ's Commercial Advantage Program

For business clients, and especially those who manage several commercial vehicles, CJ's created its Commercial Advantage Program. Commercial Advantage aims to help fleet owners track and control their costs. It features discount pricing on parts and labor for vehicle repairs as well as discounts on tires and installation. These cost-cutters apply not only to a company's commercial vehicles but also to its employees' personal automobiles. This allows both the

business and its employees to save money on automotive maintenance and repairs.

Additionally, the program gives customized pricing on automotive maintenance. It keeps maintenance records so that service reminders can be emailed in a timely fashion. It supports a large number of national fleet accounts, including Avis, CarAdvise, Donlen, EmKay, Enterprise Fleet Management, GSAFleet, and Merchants Fleet.

Bolger pointed out that CJ's business development manager, John Adiletto, has been integral to the success of the Commercial Advantage Program. According to the company's website, he "has led operations, driven growth, and developed strategic solutions for commercial fleet

clients, creating tailored plans that meet client needs while staying within budget."

Furthermore, John is an expert at helping customers select the right tires to meet their needs. In his spare time, he attends in-person, interactive events to test tires firsthand, including a recent off-roading tire tour in Utah.

Adiletto has been with CJ's for eight years. During his tenure, he also served as store operations manager at CJ's Tire and Auto in Lionville, PA.

Further enhancing CJ's through internships

In 2025, CJ's saw its internship program kick into high gear with three new interns. These college students rotated through all of CJ's departments, working in everything from marketing and accounting to sales and inventory.

"It's a great opportunity for them to see how a business works," said Bolger. "It gives kids a chance to see what they'd really be doing in a job. Through these hands-on experiences, it helps them make sure they're choosing the right majors."

She added that all three interns have obtained positions at CJ's and have jobs in departments that differ from where they may have originally considered working. She noted that Brady Benson now works in CJ's marketing department.

"I never thought I'd see that day-to-day business," said Benson, who graduated in

December 2025. "In school, I'd never really pictured it like that. It was a great opportunity to see how a business ran behind the scenes. It really opened my eyes to what I wanted to do after college."

Benson is an associate marketing manager at CJ's.

Interns are largely found through word-of-mouth and not through formal advertising or recruiting, Bolger said. She added that students don't need to be business majors or have a business background to apply. Anyone interested in interning at CJ's should call 610.404.0224 for additional information and to set up an interview.

CJ's Cares

To further support the communities in which it operates, the company continues to run its longstanding donation program, CJ's Cares. With it, CJ's raises funds for regional charities. Similar to receipt round-up programs that have become somewhat common in grocery stores, with CJ's Cares, customers are asked to round up their invoices. The difference is then donated to one of four charities. With customers who purchase tires, CJ's gives a dollar per tire to the designated nonprofit.

Each year, CJ's selects four different organizations to be the beneficiaries of CJ's Cares. In December 2025, the business presented a check for \$18,000 to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. This year, it will support St. Jude again as well as the PA Breast Cancer Coalition, Special Olympics, and Animal Rescue League of Berks County.



Grand Opening event at CJ's newest location in Willow Grove

CJ's is also a yearly sponsor of Lancaster's "Fallfest" country music festival and of Northern Berks County National Night Out (NNO). According to the Northern Berks County NNO website, the event "aims to strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve, fostering a safer and more connected environment for all" and features food, games, and informational booths at the Berks County Fairgrounds in Leesport.

For its generosity and commitment to service, CJ's has received a Shining Light award from the PA Breast Cancer Coalition. Furthermore, it has been named a distinguished honoree of the Animal Rescue League of Berks County. Since 2021, the business has donated over \$250,000 to food banks, animal shelters, and children's hospitals, among others.

The desire to help its communities is evident not only in the company's charitable giving but also in its warm, friendly attitude toward its customers.

Still the experts on tires

While CJ's provides its customers with comprehensive car care, it's worth remembering that the business got its start with tires and remains an expert in this area. Don't know when you should replace your tires or which ones best suit your vehicle or your driving habits? That's not a problem. CJ's associates are up-to-date on the latest tire and automotive technology. Once they determine the proper tire size, they can make recommendations on what tires would work best for a specific vehicle and its use.

CJ's has over 150,000 tires in stock at its distribution centers, giving customers a range of choices and prices. Among the

brands on offer are Continental, Falken, General, Maxxis, Pirelli, and Yokohama.

No matter what brand a customer chooses, CJ's recommends that drivers invest in all-weather tires. A newer cold-weather product, all-weather tires are comprised of a different rubber compound than all-season tires. For that reason, all-weather have the firm grip of traditional winter tires along with the durability of all-season tires. These tires perform well year-round in all types of weather. Generally, all-season tires are good for three seasons, but all-weather truly address all types of weather, including inclement winter conditions. Unless the customer drives in extreme winter

weather that calls for snow chains, all-weather tires will afford the maximum amount of safety on the road.

All-weather and all-season tires can last for up to 100,000 miles before needing to be replaced. Premium all-weather tires and premium all-season tires are priced similarly. Manufacturers of all-season tires, such as Bridgestone, Firestone, Continental, and General, produce all-weather tires as well. CJ's has a wide selection of all-weather tires to fit every budget. If a customer finds the same tire for a verifiable, lower price at a tire dealer located within a 25-mile radius of a CJ's location, the business will not only match, but beat it by \$5 per tire.

Note that April is "Road-Trip-Ready" month at CJ's. This promotional event makes April the perfect time to give vehicles that seasonal TLC. It will ensure that they, and you, enjoy safe driving throughout the warmer, road-trip-friendly months.

For further information about CJ's Tire and Auto or to schedule an appointment, please visit <https://cjtire.com/>.



KNOWING WHEN IT'S TIME TO REPLACE YOUR TIRES

Many of us rely on yearly automotive inspections to tell us whether it's time to replace our tires. If you don't want to risk decreased handling, traction, and fuel efficiency due to badly worn tires, keep an eye out for these four visible signs, courtesy of the American Automotive Association (AAA). Any one of these could mean that you shouldn't wait until your yearly inspection to replace your tires.

- **Sidewall cracks:** These may indicate that your tire has a leak or its treads are separating. If left unaddressed, sidewall cracks can lead to a tire blowout, which no one wants to experience.

- **Worn-out treads:** If your tire treads are low, they have less grip on the road. To avoid slipping and sliding on the highway, take a quarter and insert it into your tires' treads. If the top of George Washington's head is visible, your tread is too low and it's time to replace that tire. If the top of Washington's head sinks deep into the tread so that you can't see it, you have enough tread to keep on driving safely. Tire-tread depth should never go below 1/16th of an inch.

- **Sidewall bubbles or bulges:** As with sidewall cracks, these indicate that your tire is likely to experience a blowout. Get that tire replaced as soon as possible.

- **Unevenly worn treads:** Although this might not be reason alone to replace your tires, you should have them checked and then rotated and balanced so that they wear evenly. Likewise, confirm that your tires aren't over- or under-inflated, which can cause uneven wear.



SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IN BUSINESS

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Deb Spence

Architecting the Future of Community Connectivity

Deb Spence is a visionary entrepreneur and the founder of LevelFlat.org, a pioneering initiative designed to transform the way communities share knowledge and connect.

Driven by a mission to “architect” rather than just live in a city, Deb is currently spearheading the development of “Digital Twin Cities.” This groundbreaking project began with a prototype in Pottstown, serving as a living digital infrastructure that centralizes the scattered wisdom of a town — from local services and unwritten civic rules to trusted community contacts — into one accessible platform.

At the heart of Deb’s impact is the ONE Calendar®, a system she describes as the “heartbeat” of the community. By synchronizing local events, deadlines, and resources into a single shared stream, she has created a tool that helps residents stay aligned and informed. Her ecosystem of tools — including the “Welcome Mat” for new residents, a transparent Landlord Registry for tenant protection, and a Medical Equity Tracker — demonstrates her commitment to using technology to restore the human pulse of neighborhoods.

Deb’s journey is one of resilience and bold reinvention. Described as a “56-year-old visionary rebuilding Pottstown from the ground up,” she has leveraged her deep



understanding of local dynamics to create a “central nervous system” for the community. Her work bridges the gap between data-driven technology and real-world civic life, making the navigation of local government and small business services easier, more accountable, and more human for everyone from long-time business owners to first-time renters.

Beyond her technical innovation, Deb is a dedicated advocate for local prosperity. By making small businesses more visible and civic life more navigable, she is empowering the Pottstown region to speak with a collective voice. As she continues to expand the LevelFlat model, Deb remains focused on her core belief: that technology’s highest purpose is to empower people, protect the vulnerable, and ensure that every member of a community has the tools they need to thrive.

Lana Potgieter

Lighthouse Leadership Coaching and Development

My journey into coaching started on the “client side.” In 2003, I completed a leadership coaching program through my employer, and it reshaped how I thought about potential, performance, and purpose. At the time, I was young, confident (read: a bit arrogant), and more of a do-er than a thinker — I tended to “jump and build the plane on the way down.” A year later, I stepped away from traditional employment, trained as a coach, and began the work I now consider my life’s calling: walking alongside leaders as they turn pressure into clarity and good intentions into consistent action.

That calling was pressure-tested early. I launched my business just before an economic downturn, with a new home payment and kids in middle school. I loved the freedom of being my own boss, but I learned quickly that if I valued flexibility more than discipline, the business would stay a “nice thing to do” instead of becoming sustainable and profitable. I adjusted — slowly and steadily — and the results followed. I began working with larger organizations and long-term engagements, and I became more resilient, more teachable, and more accountable, supported by coaches and peer advisory groups who pushed me to grow.

Over time, my work expanded across industries — from manufacturing and service to nonprofit — and across borders, including the United States, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. I became known for helping leaders cut through complexity, strengthen communication, and build teams that take ownership instead of waiting for direction. I’ve been honored with LMI awards including Motivator of the Year (2017, 2020) and Facilitator of the Year (2019), but the recognition I value most is



quieter: when clients triple their results through “slight-edge” changes, when a spouse thanks me for what shifts at home, and when the work ripples out into families, friendships, and communities.

Today, I’m based in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, where my husband and I relocated to be closer to our daughter and grandchildren — and I’m building again in a new country. I didn’t expect how hard it would be; in some ways, my past success became my weakness. Leaving an established client base meant rebuilding contacts, context, connection, and credibility from scratch. That season challenged my identity and confidence, but I’ve risen from the “moving boxes” with a deeper commitment: to serve both my clients and my family without sacrificing one for the other — it’s an AND, not an OR.

Women’s History Month matters to me because leadership is influence, and women influence more than we sometimes realize. We can create environments where others rise, contribute, and succeed—at work, at home, and in the next generation. That’s the impact I aim to make: developing leaders, in life and business, that others love to follow, and building healthier, more capable workplaces — one conversation at a time.

GROW YOUR CIRCLE & YOUR BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

with amazing women of the Pottstown area!



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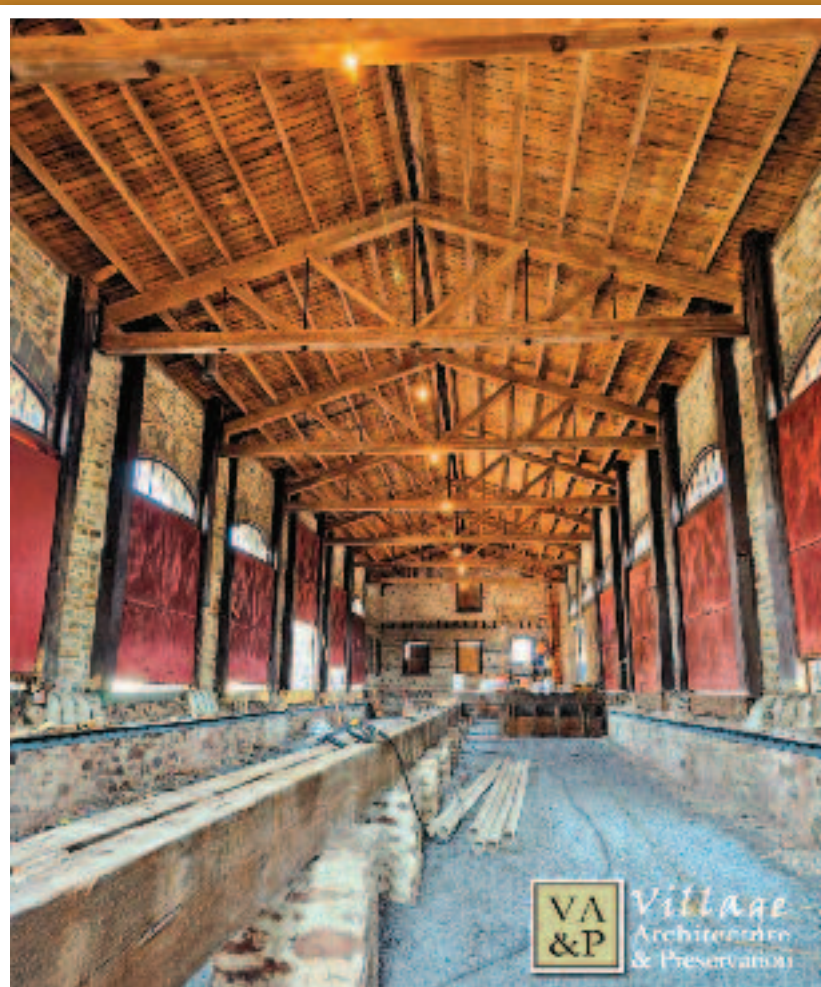


INSIDE: Back to School Month • Focus on Education • The Mid-Year Marketing Reset • Decoding the Help Industry

August 2023

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LIGHTHOUSE LEADERSHIP COACHING AND DEVELOPMENT



Jessica Zeigler-Cihlar, AIA, LEED AP BD+C Founder and Principal Architect Village Architecture & Preservation

Village Architecture & Preservation was founded in November 2011 as a home-based sole proprietorship, in Lionville Village Historic District, Chester County, Pennsylvania. VA&P's founder, Jessica Zeigler-Cihlar, was a working mother, newly unemployed due to impacts of the recession on the construction industry and determined to succeed in a role she had been quietly considering for decades.



Jessica began preparing for her career long before most youth have their first jobs: first, observing her father build his business, Thomas L. Zeigler, PE, Inc., from the ground up under similar economic challenges. Later, she worked in his office on drafting and office administration tasks. It was there that Jessica decided she loved building design, but having a greater proclivity for art than math, Architecture became her chosen career path. After graduating from Penn State University, Jessica earned an architect intern position at John Milner Associates, Inc., in West Chester, PA. She climbed the ranks for the next decade, becoming the Senior Preservation Architect in JMA's West Chester office. Her work experience was especially unique during this time, collaborating with planners, con-

servators, historians, and archeologists on projects from New York to Kentucky. When the Architecture department closed its doors, Jessica's long-term dream suddenly became an overnight necessity, and she walked through the next door toward business ownership.

With over 25 years of design experience, Jessica is a Registered Architect in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York. She is National Park Service-qualified as a Historic Architect, a LEED BD+C and NCARB Certified Professional, and a graduate of the Cornell University Sustainable Preservation Certificate program and Leadership TriCounty Class of 2022. She is a proud member of the Tri-County Area Chamber of Commerce and Morgantown Area Business Association. In recognition of her efforts to lift up and mentor fellow working women and rising professionals, Jessica was presented with the 2024 TCACC REACH Woman of Influence and Empowerment Award. Community support and volunteerism are common themes in both her work and personal life, where she is currently serving as the Vice Chair of the Caernarvon Township Zoning Hearing Board, Secretary of the Hay Creek Valley Historical Association, design consultant for Central Presbyterian Church grounds and building projects, and a coach for the Twin Valley Mountain Biking Team. She is married to her Penn State Architecture sweetheart, who shares in parenting of their three

teenagers and a rescue dog in Elverson, Berks County.

Now, as the Founder and Principal Architect at Village Architecture & Preservation, Jessica enjoys providing custom design services for home expansions, business renovations and fit-outs, church and school facility and accessibility upgrades, and historical building adaptive reuse projects. Favorite aspects of her work include discovering the unique characteristics of each project site and getting to know the individual needs of her clients. Jessica strives to prioritize owner-design team relationships, creative solutions, practical long-term building use, and efficient use and reuse of spaces. Each client is a critical part of the project team, collectively dedicated to the project's success.

Celebrating its 15th year of business, Village Architecture & Preservation is a certified WBENC and SBA Women-Owned Small Business. Recent, exciting local projects include: Lansdale Freight House Rehabilitation, Heller Homestead Park Open Space and Barn Restoration Master Plan (consulting role), Rhoads Opera Farm to Table Restaurant and Market, Little Mates Child Development Center Renovation, Union Township Municipal Complex Meeting Room Rehabilitation, and numerous residential projects throughout Montgomery, Berks, and Chester Counties. To talk with Jessica about your building project goals and ideas, please contact VA&P here: 610.389.9387 | info@village-architecture.com.



SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IN BUSINESS

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Jennifer Scotese

Express Data Payroll / Panacea Payroll Processing

Improving business environments is in Jennifer Scotese's blood. The Pottstown native started in purchasing but it's when she went to work for her father's company that she really blossomed into an advocate for small businesses. Today, Express Data Systems is dedicated to providing the highest quality payroll processing and related services to regional businesses of all sizes.

Express has been providing reliable payroll services to local employers since 1987 and now offers a full cadre of professional support services.

Jennifer started working for Express Data Systems in 1988 as office manager but quickly accepted more and more responsibilities over the years as the business grew. In 2002 Jennifer took over as company President when founder, Jay Berman, retired. Since her ascension to the lead role at Express, Jennifer has overseen steady growth of the company that now services nearly 500 clients with an all-female staff of nine.

"The workplace is a natural environment to learn from one another," says Scotese. "I'm constantly mentoring women inside and outside of the organization." Scotese who graduated from Susquehanna University in 1987 with degrees in biology and art has a wealth of practical business experience behind her.

Leading the growth of Express has also come naturally to Scotese, who oversees operations, sales and marketing. Since being named President she has implemented improvements for clients related to payroll processing to enhance Express Data Systems value as a partner.

"I brought in Teresa Kearney in 2010 as a full-time sales associate," Scotese adds.



"Teresa wasn't the first female salesperson Express has employed but she's far and away been the best."

In 2014 Scotese and her team added enhanced Human Resources and Timekeeping options so clients would have a reliable one-stop shop for quality business service support. After that, they brought in new and improved "Pay as You Go" Worker's Compensation and most recently rolled out applicant tracking and employee on-boarding.

The successful woman managing Express Data Systems has created a quality support system for small businesses owners and managers in the Philadelphia tri-state area and she replicated the model for a specialized market.

Panacea Payroll is a mirrored offering of Express but with a national service area. Designed specifically to support businesses in the cannabis industry, Panacea Payroll employs specialists with knowledge of the medical marijuana category.

Learn more by visiting www.ExpressDataSys.com or PanaceaPayroll.com. Both companies are headquartered at 3277 West Ridge Pike in Pottstown.

Joanne Washington, INC Public Benefit Corporation (JWI)

Joanne D. Washington, Owner/CEO

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The Solution to the Problem

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Joanne D Washington

Joanne Washington INC (JWI), a Public Benefit Corporation (PBC)

I am the go-to girl. I am Intelligent, witty, informative, business savvy and full of know-how.... the least of my assets. Best known for my servitude of and for people, my hospitality, prayer warrior spirit, nutritious and delicious dishes, and funny personality... which are my greatest assets. I leap bounds and knock down walls of protocols with the unstandardized abilities to help people transform mindsets from surviving mode to thriving mode, from being "maintenanced" to maintaining, and understanding how personal responsibility and accountability, the key components, are needed to achieve balance in the transformation of lifestyle wellness. I am determined to make sure no one leaves my presence the same way they came.

As an Agent of Change! I am a voice for the voiceless. I advocate fearlessly for the rights of people with visionary foresight... "people have an equitable right to live and work in the community they economically sustain". I have developed the formula for developing community building...constituents + community = commerce.

As the Founder and CEO of JWI, I welcome collaborations with like-minded agencies of social advocacy to provide goods, services, information, and resources for those experiencing marginalization / vulnerability with dignity, respect and love.

As a business owner, continue to



progress with in house businesses and outside partnerships that not only provides goods and services for profit but invests in people through program and community creation and development, management, training, homeownership, employment opportunities, education, and progressive recovery learning systems and applications;

As a leader I am a creator and innovator, I lead by example putting my life on display for all to know that hope and faith in God paved my way while innovating failed programs to stop chronic cycles of systematic program failures that produces the chronic behaviors.

As a cultivator, my voice shapes and mold communities through designing and creating... events, programs, relationships, food, clothing, perfumes, friendships, etc... "If there is a need for it, I can create it!"

I leave you with this... "A program is not successful unless the people are successful!"

Have a wonderful day on purpose!

For additional information, please call 267.770.9678 and visit www.joannewashington.com.



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Debra Basile

Spring Hollow Golf Club

Debra “Debbi” Basile is a dynamic business leader whose career reflects resilience, entrepreneurship, and a deep commitment to advancing women through both executive leadership and community service.

A graduate of Daniel Boone High School and Penn State University with a degree in Marketing, Debbi began her career in Baltimore before transitioning into the beauty industry, where she built a successful professional path that included experience at About Faces Day Spa and Arrojo Studio in Manhattan. She later founded and operated SASS Salon, a boutique salon in Baltimore, leading the business with distinction until its closure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, Debbi joined her family’s business, Spring Hollow Golf Club in Spring City, Pennsylvania, stepping into a critical leadership role during the hospitality industry’s recovery period. As Director of Sales & Marketing and Chief Operating Officer, she strengthened operations, rebuilt event revenue, and positioned the organization for long-term growth.

Beyond her executive role, Debbi serves as Interim Vice President of Soroptimist International of Phoenixville,



an organization dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls through education and economic empowerment. In her second year as a member, she secured four of the five major sponsors for the organization’s signature “Beef, Beer & Bubbles” fundraising event — demonstrating exceptional leadership in sponsorship development and community engagement.

Debbi’s leadership is defined by adaptability, strategic vision, and a steadfast commitment to empowering women and strengthening the communities she serves.



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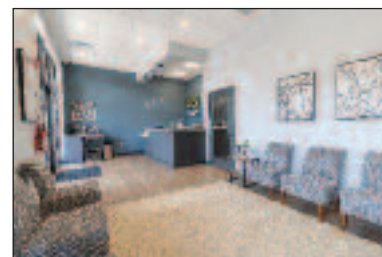
Dr. Alisa Zitter

Serenity Dental Spa

Dr. Alisa Zitter is the owner of Serenity Dental Spa in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, where she has created a unique practice that blends comprehensive dental care with advanced facial aesthetic treatments in a relaxing, spa-like environment. Patients can improve their smile and skin in one convenient setting through services such as Botox, dermal fillers, laser skin resurfacing, and RF microneedling.

Serenity Dental Spa is redefining the traditional dental experience by offering a welcoming atmosphere that feels more like a boutique spa than a typical dental office. Through continued training in advanced technology such as Fotona laser systems and Potenza RF microneedling, Dr. Zitter brings innovative treatment options to the Pottstown area that were once only available in larger metropolitan markets.

At Serenity Dental Spa, the focus is on helping patients look and feel their best by enhancing both oral health and natural beauty in a serene, personalized setting.



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Experienced Entrepreneur Danielle Kangas Appointed as Main Street Manager for PBIDMA

The Pottstown Business Improvement District Management Association (PBIDMA) recently announced the appointment of Danielle Kangas as the new Main Street Manager. With a robust background in both entrepreneurship and technology, Kangas is poised to lead initiatives aimed at the continuation of revitalizing Pottstown's downtown corridor.

"This is not just about managing a district; it's about bringing together business and community," said Peggy Lee-Clark, Executive Director of Pottstown Area Economic Development. "Danielle's unique blend of experience offers exactly what is needed to foster an environment where local businesses can thrive amidst change." Her leadership is paramount in drawing more foot traffic from external audiences while staying true to the community's roots.

Kangas co-founded Anno Artem Art Gallery with her husband in late 2024, displaying their commitment to supporting local artists. Her diverse professional journey also includes various roles within the Information Technology sector, experiences that have equipped her with invaluable skills for navigating complex environments. Her experience extends beyond professional endeavors. She serves in a voluntary capacity on the Board of Art Fusion.

Danielle will be leading efforts that align with Pennsylvania's Main Street Matters Program supporting communities in planning for revitalization, aesthetic improvements and increased safety and security with a focus on sustained growth through strategic partnerships.



Danielle Kangas

Additionally, she will work with Pottstown Area Economic Development (PAED) on their marketing efforts — to ensure complimentary messaging on economic revitalization efforts throughout Pottstown Borough.

About PBIDMA

The Pottstown Business Improvement District Management Association (PBIDMA) was authorized by Pottstown's Borough Council in June 2025 to provide specialized attention on Pottstown's Downtown for the purpose of decreasing vacancies, improving quality of life for residents, stabilizing businesses, and increasing property values.

For more information, please email info@paedinc.org.



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EXECUTIVE BENEFITS PLANNING

Protecting Leadership, Strengthening the Organization



BENEFITS IQ

By Bryan Nester,
Nester Insurance, Inc.

In today's evolving business environment, companies face more competition than ever and not only for customers, but for talent.

At the center of every successful organization is a strong leadership team. Protecting, retaining, and rewarding that leadership requires thoughtful planning. That is where executive benefits planning plays a critical role.

Executive benefits planning is a strategic approach to attracting, rewarding, and retaining key leaders within an organization. While traditional employee benefits create a strong foundation for the broader workforce, executive benefits are specifically designed to address the unique financial exposures, compensation structures, and long-term planning needs of senior leadership.

In today's competitive talent market, executive benefits are no longer optional. They are a critical component of a well-structured compensation strategy.

Why Executive Benefits Matter

Executives face different financial realities than the average employee. Higher income levels, performance-based bonuses, equity compensation, and increased responsibility create more complex planning needs. Standard group benefits often fall short in protecting these individuals fully.

Without proper planning, executives may face:

- Significant income gaps during disability
- Estate tax exposure
- Asset erosion due to long-term care costs
- Inadequate life insurance coverage
- Limited retirement income replacement

Well-designed executive benefits programs help fill those gaps while reinforcing an organization's commitment to its leadership team.

Key Needs

Executive Benefits Address

Income Protection Beyond Traditional Group Limits: Most group disability policies replace only 40–60 percent of income and are subject to monthly caps. For highly compensated executives, that can result in a substantial shortfall during a disability.

Asset Protection from Catastrophic Health Events: Healthcare and long-term care costs can significantly impact even high-net-worth individuals. Life insurance policies with Long-Term Care (LTC) riders offer a dual-purpose solution.

Permanent Protection and Wealth Transfer: Group Whole Life insurance is another powerful executive benefit. Unlike term coverage tied to employment, whole life provides permanent protection with guaranteed death benefits and cash value accumulation.

Retention and Loyalty Incentives: Executive benefits are not just protection tools, they are retention strategies. Organizations that invest in executive benefits send a clear message: leadership stability matters.

(Continued on page 16)

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BENEFITS IQ

(Continued from page 15)

Tax-Efficient Planning Opportunities: When properly structured, executive benefits can offer significant tax advantages for both the employer and the executive. Whether implemented through executive bonus arrangements, carve-outs, or supplemental retirement strategies, these tools can be integrated into a broader compensation plan in a cost-effective and tax-conscious manner.

The Advantage of Group Executive Programs

One of the most compelling features of executive benefits offered through group structures is ease of implementation.

Many programs provide:

- Simplified or streamlined underwriting
- Guaranteed issue coverage limits
- Reduced medical requirements
- Faster approval processes
- Employer-sponsored enrollment

For executives, time is valuable. Simplified enrollment and underwriting remove barriers and increase participation. For employers, these programs typically involve minimal administrative burden while delivering high perceived value.

Taking the Next Step

Executive benefits planning should not

be a one-size-fits-all solution. Each organization's leadership structure, compensation model, and long-term goals require careful evaluation.

At **Nester Insurance Inc.**, we specialize in designing tailored executive benefits strategies that align with your organization's objectives. Whether you are exploring:

- Group Whole Life solutions
- Executive disability carve-out programs
- Life insurance with long-term care benefits
- Supplemental retirement strategies
- Retention-focused executive compensation planning

Our team works closely with business owners and leadership teams to develop customized, practical solutions.

For more information or to schedule a consultation, contact: **Nester Insurance Inc.** — Email: bnester@nesterinsurance.com; Website: www.nesterinsurance.com

Executive leadership is one of a company's most valuable assets. Protecting that leadership through thoughtful executive benefits planning is not simply a perk — it is a strategic investment in long-term success.

If your organization has not reviewed its executive benefits strategy recently, now is the time.

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WHY YOUR BUSINESS AND 90 PERCENT OF COMPANIES AREN'T READY FOR AI



TECHNOLOGY
By Marc Upstead,
Plus One Technology

Artificial intelligence feels like magic until it meets a messy business. Then it feels less like Iron Man's JARVIS and more like a Roomba stuck under the couch.

Here is the hard truth many small businesses quietly suspect. AI will not fix chaos. AI will *amplify* whatever already exists. If your processes are unclear today, AI will automate that confusion tomorrow.

But the good news is simple. The same foundational work that makes AI possible also makes your business smoother, more scalable, and far less dependent on superhero employees who keep everything in their heads.

Let's walk through why most companies are not ready for AI and what you can do to join the prepared few.

The Problem Most Leaders Don't See Yet

When we talk with small business owners about AI readiness, we usually ask two questions.

1. Are roles in your organization clearly defined
2. Are your processes documented in a way someone new could follow

Most leaders pause at this point. Some laugh nervously. A few pretend their internet connection dropped.

This is normal. According to multiple industry surveys, the majority of organizations lack both clear role clarity and fully documented processes. Which means the AI conversation is happening on a shaky foundation.

Yet these two items are the *non-negotiables* before AI or automation can truly help your business.

Why These Precursors Matter More Than the Technology

Think of AI as a new employee with unlimited energy and no need for coffee breaks. To delegate work to this powerful new teammate, you must know:

- What needs to be done
- Who normally does it
- What the steps are
- What success looks like

Without that, AI just guesses. And unlike your human team who can walk down the hall and ask a clarifying question, AI will confidently automate the wrong thing at high speed.

This is why 90 percent of businesses are not truly AI ready. It's not a tech problem. It's an operational clarity problem.

Clear and Defined Process Makes Your Business Run Smoother

You can be the hero! Your goal is not "implement AI." Your real goals are things like:

- Less chaos
- Faster onboarding
- Fewer fires to put out
- A business that runs smoothly whether you are in the building or not

AI can help you achieve all of that. But only once the foundation is set.

The Three Essential Precursors to AI Readiness

1. Clear and Defined Roles

If job responsibilities overlap, disappear, or shift depending on the mood of the week, AI has no chance of helping. Role clarity gives structure to your business. Your team knows the outcomes they own. AI systems know where to plug in. Clarity reduces friction. AI thrives in low friction environments.

2. Documented Processes

If your business relies on tribal knowledge or conversations that start with "Ask Sarah she's the only one who knows how to do that," your AI journey stops here. Documented processes allow your business to:

- Delegate consistently
- Train quickly
- Scale without reinventing the wheel

And in the future these same documented steps become inputs for automation.

3. Data That Is Accurate and Accessible

AI can make predictions but it cannot repair broken or inconsistent data. Clean data is the fuel. Documentation is the engine. AI is the turbocharger. You need all three to go anywhere useful.

(Continued on page 18)

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TECHNOLOGY

(Continued from page 17)

This Is the Step Most Businesses Skip

Most companies leap toward AI tools before they build the system those tools will live inside. It is like installing a smart thermostat in a building with no wiring. Great device. Zero function. The organizations seeing real AI benefits are the ones that invested in clarity and documentation long before the hype. Once the foundations were in place the transition to AI became natural and low stress.

What's at Risk if You Don't Prepare

Leaders often underestimate the downside of skipping this groundwork. If your business is not ready you risk:

- Automating broken processes which magnifies mistakes
- Creating more confusion not less
- Relying on staff knowledge that walks out the door at turnover
- Wasting time and money on tools that never deliver their promised impact

AI only pays off when it has something solid to stand on.

The Straightforward Path to AI Readiness

The good news. You don't need an army of consultants or a yearlong transformation. You can start small and see benefits right away.

1. Document your top five repeatable processes
2. Create a simple responsibility chart for your team
3. Store everything where your team can access it
4. Improve gradually each quarter instead of trying to overhaul everything at once

If you want help building the technology foundation that supports these efforts you can explore our services for Business Process Optimization.

A Final Thought

AI does not replace good management. It rewards it. Businesses that invest in clarity and documentation today will be the ones who scale faster and gain a real competitive advantage tomorrow. If you want your company to be in the ten percent who are ready for AI, you can start with one simple step. Capture what already works. Everything else becomes easier from there.

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ANNUITIES: FRIEND OR FOE



TIPS

By Brad Palmer,
President, The
Conestoga Group, Inc.

Annuities can be helpful tax favored investment vehicles and retirement income tools. However, there are times they may not be helpful, and it is important to understand how to determine their positive quality.

Useful Features: Annuities can be used for either accumulation or distribution. As an accumulation annuity, contributions grow on a tax-deferred basis. Transfers from one account to another within the annuity do not trigger taxes on gains. Annuities are either fixed, indexed, or variable. Fixed annuities credit an interest rate based upon a rate of return driven by the general asset account of the insurance company providing the annuity, where in most states those assets are limited to primarily low risk, fixed income assets. Indexed annuities credit returns based upon the investment results of specified indices, such as the S&P 500. However, the full return is restricted a variety of ways such as caps on how much of the index return is credited or thresholds where only the return above a certain amount is credited. We have

also seen where in many cases the S&P Index used by the annuity is actually the S&P 500 "P" index that is based only upon the price of the index, not the S&P 500 "T" index that is based upon total return including price growth and dividends. Variable annuities have actual separately managed accounts available within the annuity that allow diversified investing in stocks, bonds, and fixed income assets.

Distribution annuities are also called immediate annuities where a lump sum of money purchases an income stream that is usually guaranteed for life with a minimum number of years if the buyer should decease unexpectedly. It can also provide joint income to two people with a payment continuing to the survivor of the pair. 401k plans are now required to list guaranteed retirement income options which are usually immediate annuities.

How to Measure Quality: Accumulation annuities often have many additional fees that reduce the rate of return. A management fee including mortality expenses can be anywhere from .25 percent to 1.50 percent. Additional riders may have additional charges. Separately managed accounts in variable annuities may invest in mutual funds that have fees plus the separate insur-

ance company account can also charge a fee. The combined cost can often be over 2.00 percent. We usually look for annuities that have no more than a total for all fees of no more than 1.50 percent.

Distribution annuities can be analyzed by having your advisor review the IRR (Internal Rate of Return). An annuity that can deliver \$6,000 a year for the rest of your life if bought with \$100,000 may seem like a six percent return at first glance. However, if the buyer only lives from 65 to 83 (average mortality for U.S. males), only \$108,000 is received over 18 years. That's eight percent over 18 years or just barely a positive return.

Risks of Combined Accumulation & Distribution: We warn all of our clients to watch out for accumulation annuities that offer returns dependent upon your ultimate conversion to a distribution annuity with them. Many have reduced annuitization factors that make up for the perceived high accumulation returns. The best approach is to usually accumulate funds in one annuity, and then use those funds to purchase a distribution annuity separately.

We welcome any inquiries you might have on analyzing annuities. Our website is www.cgiadvisors.com and I can be reached at bpalmer@cgiadvisors.com or 610.854.1420.

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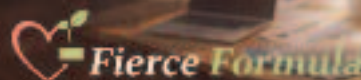
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THREE FIERCE AI TIPS TO SPRING FORWARD THIS MARCH



By Deborah Ann Spence,
Fiercpreneur

March is that quiet turning point — winter finally breaks, and everything that looked dead starts waking up. And if you're paying attention, that same thing is happening in you, too. You've spent months planning, cleaning, and setting up systems. Now it's time to move. March is about planting bold seeds, taking smart risks, and trusting that growth always follows action.

Let's talk about how to use AI to grow your business — with clarity, confidence, and heart.

1. Refresh Your Message, Not Just Your Marketing

If your content sounds the same as it did last year, people stop listening. Use AI to help you rework your message — not by chasing trends, but by sharpening your truth. Ask it to analyze your top-performing posts, emails, and videos. Find the patterns: what tone got the most response, what words connected, what offers converted. Then rewrite your brand story around *impact*, not imitation. People want authenticity, not perfection.

Fierce Truth: The strongest marketing comes from healed confidence, not forced strategy.

2. Use AI to Multiply Your Reach — Without Losing Your Voice

You've already built the message — now make sure it travels. Use AI tools to repurpose your content across platforms:

- Turn one blog into five short posts.
- Convert a podcast clip into a captioned reel.
- Use transcription AI to pull quotes that sound like you.

Consistency doesn't have to be exhausting when you've got automation that carries your voice forward.

Fierce Truth: Reach is nothing without resonance — keep your heart in every post.

3. Spring Clean Your Sales Flow

Growth dies in clutter. If you're still manually following up, chasing leads, or forgetting who booked last, it's time for a reset. Use AI to organize your CRM, tag your leads, and track who's ready for a call. Automate the small steps that drain your creative energy — so you can focus on what actually drives results: conversation, relationships, and clarity.

Fierce Truth: You can't grow what you don't track. Clean your flow, then watch your numbers rise.

Final Thought

March is your fresh start — not because the calendar says so, but because you've earned it. All the lessons, all the cleanup, all the quiet rebuilding? That was your preparation season. Now it's time to rise, plant, and grow again — fiercely.



*This is your spring.
Lead with heart. Build with fire.
Grow with purpose.*



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HOW INSTAGRAM REELS HELP YOU GROW YOUR AUDIENCE



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS By Theresa Mintzer

Are you looking to grow your Instagram account? Creating Reels is one of the most effective ways to work with the current Instagram algorithm and grow your account organically. Why? Video content still stops the scroll. People are far more likely to pause for motion than for a static image.

Instagram Reels can be up to three minutes long and offer plenty of creative flexibility. You can add text overlays, filters, music, voiceovers, and captions to make your content more engaging and accessible. Adding captions and translation features is especially helpful, as many users watch videos without sound. You can also upload videos directly from your phone's photo gallery, making Reels easy to create even on a busy day. Unlike Stories, Reels are permanent and appear both on your Instagram feed and in the Reels tab, giving them a longer lifespan and more opportunities to be discovered.

Creating Reels is also a great way to show the personality behind your business. Content ideas include behind-the-scenes looks, quick tips, product highlights, FAQs, or a simple introduction to who you are and what you do. If you're feeling stuck, search for similar businesses or creators for inspiration, but always put your own spin on it.

Most importantly, keep your ideal audience in mind. You want to attract people who are genuinely interested in your services or products. A large following means very little if those followers are not potential customers.

While Reels are powerful, they shouldn't replace Stories or static posts entirely. The key to growth is consistency and creating content that speaks directly to your ideal customer. So have fun, stay intentional, and try creating a Reel today.

Need help putting this into practice? I offer social media coaching to guide you through the process. Visit mintzer.solutions.com to learn more and schedule a session.

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Online bidding ending Sunday, March 8th

2nd New Car Dealer Trade-ins
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THREE REASONS TO GET A BUSINESS VALUATION



By Jeffrey L. Shelly,
Senior Business
Analyst, One Source
Business Solutions LLC

With the new year upon us, business owners close out the old year and look forward to the new one. It's not only a good time to plan but also an appropriate time to see where the business stands. One way to do this is to look at the business and see what its current market value would be and for what it would sell. There are several reasons why having a professional Business Valuation performed would be useful.

Understand the Value of Your Asset: Owning a business is like holding any other investment — you need to know its worth to plan effectively for the future. Ignoring your business's value is like never checking your investment statements or stock performance.

Set a Fair Price for Buy-In: An independent, third-party Business Valuation ensures a fair price for both buyers and sellers. It helps outgoing owners plan for retirement while giving new owners a strong start without the burden of overpaying.



Prepare for a Future Sale: Knowing your business's current value helps you identify what drives or detracts from it, so you can take steps to increase its worth. When the time comes to sell, you'll be prepared for a smooth and profitable transition.

Like any other business tool, a business valuation can be useful for planning the future of the business as well as the owner.

Considering a Business Valuation? To schedule a free consultation contact: Jeffrey Shelly - Jeff@Onesbs.com or Rob Knarr - Rob@Onesbs.com.

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LEADERSHIP IS INFLUENCE, AND INFLUENCE HAS A DARK SIDE



By Lana Potgieter,
Lighthouse Leadership
Coaching &
Development

You can have the title, the tenure, and the expertise... and still watch your team:

- miss deadlines,
- wait for permission,
- tell you what's safe instead of what's true,
- perform in front of you and stall when you leave.

That's not an intelligence issue. It's an influence issue. **Leadership is influence.** And influence doesn't travel through job descriptions. It travels through *daily interactions* — what people experience when they work with you.

Influence has a bright side and a dark side

Most leaders hear "influence" and think motivation, inspiration, buy-in.

But influence can also look like:

- fear-based compliance,
- silence disguised as agreement,
- people managing your mood instead of managing the work,
- politics, favoritism, or walking on eggshells.

So, here's the uncomfortable truth: **you're always influencing.** The real question is whether your influence creates **ownership** or **avoidance**.

A 60-second self-audit

Ask yourself:

1. When I walk into a room, what changes — energy, openness, caution, speed, silence?

2. Do people bring issues early... or only when they're urgent?

3. Do I get the truth... or the version that feels safest to share?

4. How often do I rely on authority, rather than trust to get compliance?

5. If I lost my positional authority tomorrow, who would still choose to follow my lead — and why?

These questions aren't to flatter or shame you. They reveal the operating system behind your influence.

Three conditions that ensure influence creates ownership.

Credibility: "Will you do what you said? Will they change their mind again?"

Credibility isn't charisma. It's consistency. People move faster when they can predict you — your standards, your decisions, and your follow-through.

Certainty: "Do I know exactly what they expect of me? Do priorities change quickly?"

Certainty doesn't mean comfort. It means clarity. When priorities and decision rights are unclear, people conserve energy and wait. When clarity is high, problems surface earlier, and decisions happen closer to the work.

Belonging: "Do I matter here? Do I have a say? Is my opinion trusted?"

Belonging isn't "be nice." It's treating people like capable adults. People contribute more when they're invited into the thinking, not just handed tasks.

(Continued on page 24)



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LEADERSHIP IS INFLUENCE

(Continued from page 23)

The hidden business cost of weak influence

When trust is thin, influence becomes expensive:

- You repeat messages—and they still get translated differently.
- People comply in public and resist in private.
- The team waits for instructions instead of thinking.
- You become the bottleneck because decisions funnel back to you.
- You spend emotional bandwidth managing reactions instead of driving outcomes.

That cost shows up as slow execution, rework, churn, and “mysterious” under-performance.

A practical shift: from “in charge” to building ownership

Under pressure, many leaders tighten their grip: decide faster, speak more firmly, correct more quickly, and control more. Sometimes that’s necessary in a true crisis. The danger is when it becomes the default.

Over time, it trains your team to defer rather than own — and you end up with the workload you were trying to delegate.

The shift isn’t to become softer. It’s to become more connected and more clear:

- Stay firm on outcomes and standards,
- Pull people into trade-offs early,
- Ask better questions sooner: *What are you seeing that I’m not? What’s the risk? What decision can you make without me next time?*
- Make decision rights explicit — so ownership has somewhere to land.

That’s influence you can scale: not “because I said so,” but because people choose to commit. You scale a sustainable business, you don’t scale the chaos.

About the Author: Lana Potgieter is the founder of Lighthouse Leadership Coaching & Development and a Strategic Clarity Partner to growth-minded leaders who want to turn complexity into focused execution. She partners with business owners and leadership teams to strengthen influence, alignment, and performance through practical leadership systems.

Call to Action

If you want to increase influence without becoming the bottleneck, book a short clarity conversation by texting your name to **484.347.0515**. We can identify where the opportunity for greater influence is within your business and look at “how to execute” to get the bottom line results you desire — because your people lean in, step up, and move with you.

BECOME THE LEADER THAT OTHERS LOVE TO Follow



Led by award-winning leadership developer, Lana Potgieter, Lighthouse Leadership Coaching & Development (LLCD) has successfully helped countless business owners and mid-sized executives reach leadership excellence, align their teams, and drive sustainable growth to thrive in today’s competitive landscape. Call **484-347-0515** today for a private consultation.

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Muhlenberg Greene Architects Welcomes New Architectural Staffer

Alexandra Murphy Joins MG Project Design Team

MG Architects recently announced that Alexandra Murphy has joined our firm as part of the Architectural Staff.

Alexandra 'Ally' Murphy will assist the firm's Architects and Project Managers with all phases of design documentation and construction contract administration, develop detailed 3D/BIM models and will create construction documents and schedules from those models. She will also assist Project Managers with construction phase contract administration.

Earning a Bachelor of Architecture Art History Minor, and Urban Studies Designation, Alexandra graduated from Marywood University in 2025. She gained professional experience as an Architectural Intern at Breslin Architects, working as a summer intern. A graduate of Blue Mountain Academy, Ms. Murphy achieved high honors during her tenure, including holding the role of Treasurer for the National Honor Society. She additionally holds a Procore certification.

Ally will begin documenting her real-world experience via the industry-standard Architectural Experience Program® (AXP®). Developed by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) and required by most U.S. licensing boards, the AXP provides a framework to guide emerging designers through earning and reporting their professional experience.

Ms. Murphy will work out of the firm's Wyomissing office, but as customary, she will support projects throughout the firm's service area, including eleven states (Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North and South Carolina, Virginia, Vermont) and the District of Columbia.



**Alexandra Murphy, Architectural Staff,
Muhlenberg Greene Architects**

MG Architects has delivered design, planning, and construction administration services throughout the region and neighboring states for more than a century. The firm actively engages in projects, initiatives, and events that support local workforce development and foster growth opportunities for architectural professionals at every career stage. We view it as our professional responsibility to provide guidance, mentorship, and hands-on experience to emerging architects as they progress toward licensure. Welcome to the team Ally!

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

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Denise L. Williams
Founder of Be Resilient

FORCE Chairperson

Co-Founder:
The VIBE Create Social Innovation Hub
VIBE Cafe

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www.berezilient.org 484-824-5727

VIBE Creative Social Innovation Hub

The VIBE Creative Social Innovation Hub has officially opened its doors in Pottstown, introducing a vibrant new community-centered space designed to spark creativity, entrepreneurship, and connection. Founded through a collaboration between two minority-led nonprofits Be ReZilient and the STRIVE Initiative the VIBE Creative Hub brings together artists, small business owners, youth, and local leaders to learn, create, and build pathways to opportunity. The hub offers creative studios, workforce and leadership programming, and space for community gatherings, positioning the arts and innovation as tools for economic mobility and collective healing.

At the heart of the hub is the VIBE Café, a warm, welcoming community café created to be more than just a place to grab coffee. The café serves as a gathering point for conversation, collaboration, and creative exchange, while also functioning as a real-world training and workforce development space. Through hands-on experience in customer service, operations, and entrepreneurship, local residents especially young people and emerging entrepreneurs gain skills that connect creativity to sustainable career pathways. The café will also host open



mic, art pop-ups, and small performances that spotlight local talent and deepen community connection.

The launch of the VIBE Creative Social Innovation Hub reflects a broader commitment to community-driven revitalization and equity in Pottstown. Aligned with the work of the FORCE Initiative, the hub is focused on building leadership, supporting minority-owned businesses, and creating access to opportunity through collaboration and innovation. Together, the VIBE Hub and VIBE Café represent a new model for how creative spaces can strengthen neighborhoods, nurture local voices, and help shape a more inclusive future for the borough.

For additional information, please call 484.8245727 and visit www.berezilient.org.

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GRCA WELCOMES SEVEN NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA), recently announced the appointment of David Farrar, General Manager – Santander Arena & Santander Performing Arts Center, President – Reading Royals; Shaun Hart, Vice President – Sales & Marketing, AmeriGas Propane, LP; Craig Hirneisen, Senior Counsel, Litigation & HR, EnerSys; Danielle Knudsen, Vice President, Griffin Financial Group; Rebecca Shugar, Vice President & Senior Relationship Manager, M&T Bank; Greg Wells, Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Comcast Northeast Division; and Heather Zimmerman, President & CEO, Experience Reading & Berks County, to the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry Board of Directors (GRCCI).

"I look forward to working with each of these incoming board members and tapping into their expertise to continue to better serve our Greater Reading business community," said Lucine Sihelnik, President & CEO, GRCA.

GRCA extends its sincere appreciation to the outgoing members of its Board of Directors whose terms have concluded. Andrea Funk, EVP & CFO of EnerSys, and Ryan Redner, President of Redner's Markets, have completed their service on the Board.

"During their tenure, both leaders contributed valuable insight, strategic guidance and a deep commitment to the business community. We are grateful for their dedication and the impact of their service, and we wish them continued success in their ongoing professional endeavors," said Laura B. Haffner, GRCCI Chairwoman.

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

THE BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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GREATER READING Chamber Alliance

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Intro to Excel

March 2, 9, 16 and 23
8 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Shearer Technical Computer Consultants
727 Penn Ave., West Reading
\$400/person- GRCA Members;
\$495/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/introexcel26

Advanced Excel

March 3, 10, 17 and 24
8 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Shearer Technical Computer Consultants
727 Penn Ave., West Reading
\$400/person- GRCA Members;
\$495/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/advancedexcel26

Supervisor Training Module 2: Managing Performance & Developing Employees*

March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 and April 7
8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$695/person- GRCA Members;
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Register at Greaterreading.org/mod2

Berks Women2Women

15th Annual Conference + Expo
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8 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
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Register at Greaterreading.org/w2w-conference-expo/

Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace*

March 5, 12
9 a.m.-Noon

Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$395/person- GRCA Members;
\$495/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/emotion

GRCA Executive Leadership Academy - Financial Analysis for Executives - The Bottom Line

March 5, 12, 16, 26 and April 2
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$1,495/person- GRCA Members;
\$1,895/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/bottomline

Coffee&Convos

Communicate with Purpose: Building Positive, Productive Workplaces

March 10
7:30 a.m.- 9 a.m.
Family Guidance Center
GRCA Member-exclusive event
Register at Greaterreading.org/communicate

Intermediate Excel

March 11, 18, 25 and April 1
8 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Shearer Technical Computer Consultants
727 Penn Ave., West Reading
\$400/person- GRCA Members;
\$495/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/interexcel26

Regional Chamber Networking

March 18
5 p.m.-6:30 p.m.
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GRCA Member-exclusive event
Register at Greaterreading.org/regional

State of the County

March 20
7:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m.
Abraham Lincoln, 100 N 5th St., Reading
\$50/person- GRCA Members;
\$65/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/county26

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GREATER READING CHAMBER ALLIANCE TO OPEN NOMINATION PERIOD FOR 2026 BUSINESS AWARDS

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) announced that the nomination period for its Business Excellence Awards opens today. The awards feature two categories separating businesses by annual revenue. Category 1 will represent businesses with \$1M in annual revenue for the past three years. Category 2 will be reserved for businesses with \$250K in annual revenue for the past three years.

Businesses which are not headquartered in Berks County, but that can demonstrate that at least 50 percent of its annual revenue is generated from Berks County will be eligible to apply.

Eligible companies must:

- Be a for-profit, public or privately held.
- Be headquartered in Berks County or demonstrate that 50% of company revenue is generated from Berks County.
- Have annual revenues of at least \$1M+ (Category 1) or \$250K+ (Category 2) in the three most recent fiscal years.
- Be a Greater Reading Chamber Alliance member.
- Submit supporting documentation for revenues with the nomination form.

A tax return does not need to be provided for the application. An internal financial statement or an auditor-verified letter for support is sufficient.

Nomination forms will be sent through email and available online. Winners of these awards will be recognized at the Annual Dinner May 13 at Santander Arena.

All nomination forms are due **Monday, March 9**. Late submissions will not be accepted. For each award, nominated businesses are ranked according to revenue growth. KPMG LLC will handle tabulating the rankings. KPMG LLP reserves

the right to make the final determinations as to qualification and of comparable revenue levels. All revenue figures will be held in the **strictest confidence** by KPMG LLP. All Business Excellence Award winners will be recognized via a video montage tribute with special recognition to the Top 3 in each category at the Annual Dinner.

Eligible businesses may apply at www.greaterreading.org/annualbusinessawards. More information about the Annual Dinner, its keynote speaker and how to purchase tickets will be available soon. Keep checking greaterreading.org for the latest updates.



18 W. Lightcap Road, Suite 613, 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

TRICOUNTY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION AWARDS \$12,500 TO SUPPORT LOCAL STUDENTS AND CAREER-FOCUSED EDUCATION

The TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce proudly presented a \$12,500 check to support local schools and career-focused education programs during the TriCounty Economic Development Brunch on January 21, made possible through the generous contributions of Martin Stone Quarries, Inc. and Tompkins.

Martin Stone Quarries, Inc. directed its donation through the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation to benefit the Western Montgomery Career and Technology Center. Tompkins' contribution will support additional local schools across the region.

"Martin Stone Quarries, Inc. is proud to support the Western Montgomery Career and Technical Center through a donation to the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation. The donation directly supports the WMCTC welding program, helping train students in a skilled trade that is critical to our industry. By investing in career and technical education, Martin Stone Quarries aims to encourage greater interest in the trades and support workforce development in our local community," said Rod Martin, President of Martin Stone Quarries, Inc.

During the event, Dave Livengood of the Western Montgomery Career and Technology Center shared how these funds directly enhance student opportunities and strengthen hands-on, career-driven programs that prepare young people for success in the workforce.

"These investments go far beyond a dollar amount," said Livengood. "They translate into real opportunities for students—expanded programming, updated resources, and stronger pathways into high-demand careers right here in our community."

Through the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Inc.—an approved Educational Improvement Organization (EIO)



designated by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development—these contributions support vocational and career development programs for students in kindergarten through 12th grade across Chamber-member school districts.

"Tompkins is proud to support the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation and its commitment to strengthening local education," said Laurie Grube, community banking regional manager. "Investing in students today helps build the skilled, resilient workforce our communities will rely on tomorrow, and we're grateful for the opportunity to support the foundation in this endeavor."

"As a career banker, I've seen firsthand the positive impact of good early education on communities that invest in it. These communities prosper because education creates a skilled workforce that can aspire to high-paying jobs, raising the standard of living for everyone. These communities create leaders who are positioned to take the reins when local companies and organizations change hands, securing economic prosperity for local families. The TriCounty Area

Chamber of Commerce Foundation funds educational enhancements that give local students a good running start. When families thrive, communities thrive and that's important to all of us, but especially important to community banks like Tompkins," said Ginger Kunkel, President – PA of Tompkins Community Bank.

The Foundation is authorized under Act 4 of 2001, which amended the Pennsylvania Public School Code to allow businesses to earn significant state tax credits for contributions to educational improvement organizations. Businesses that participate in the Foundation's EIO program may be eligible to receive 75 to 90 percent Pennsylvania state tax credits on contributions of up to \$300,000.

"The TriCounty Chamber is proud to partner with businesses like Martin Stone Quarries and Tompkins who recognize that investing in education is investing in the future of our workforce and our regional economy," said Harrison Santangelo, TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce President

Businesses interested in supporting local education while receiving Pennsylvania tax credits are encouraged to learn more about the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation's EIO program.

For more information about Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development website.

About the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Inc.: The TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Inc. is a designated Educational Improvement Organization (EIO) approved by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Foundation funds vocational and career development programs for K-12 students in Chamber-member public school districts, helping prepare the next generation for meaningful careers and a strong regional workforce.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

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<http://www.1031corp.com/>

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<https://drug-guard.com/>
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Joanne Washington INC Public Benefit Corporation

(844) 446-2556

<http://www.joannewashington.com/>
Economic Development

My Water Damage Hero

(610) 228-7440

<http://www.mywaterdamagehero.com/>
Remodeling / Renovations / Repairs

Red Beard Technology Solutions

(833) 482-3273

<https://redbeardts.com/>
Computer Consultants / Support Services

Unfinished Athletics, Inc.

(484) 985-9175

<http://www.unfinishedathletics.com/>
Health Clubs / Fitness Centers / Gyms

MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

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

48 Years

A. D. Moyer Lumber & Hardware, Inc.

40 Years

Boyetown Museum of Historic Vehicles

27 Years

Allegheny East Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

15 Years

Comcast Business

10 Years

Greater Pottstown Tennis & Learning

Santander Arena & Performing Arts Center

6 Years

General Carl Spaatz Army Air Force Museum

Reading Royals

JJC Automotive

Storage Sense Pottstown

Iron Gate Biergarten



UPCOMING EVENTS.



MAR
12

Thursday, 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Young Professionals: St. Patty's Party

Celebrate the luck of the Irish with us at our Young Professionals St. Patty's Party! This relaxed after-work hangout will bring together great people, easy conversation, and a festive splash of green. Enjoy light food, refreshments, take a chance at winning our raffle prize, and help us spread some community cheer by bringing a green canned good to donate to a local food pantry. And of course—wear something green to get into the St. Patrick's Day spirit! All this fun for \$20 per person. It's the perfect way to unwind, meet new people, and kick off the holiday a little early. 🍀

MAR
26

Thursday, 5:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Boyetown Area Progress Dinner 2026

The evening will also feature the BASH Telecommunications Showcase Video, highlighting inspiring local stories of growth and progress, including the Boyertown Community Library's recent move and exciting updates at its new location, continued investment and expansion at the Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles with its new carriage barn, and the rise of Nae Nae's Bakery—a Boyertown Area Senior High alum-owned business quickly gaining popularity and making a meaningful impact in our community. We will honor Ellen Martignetti, Main Street Manager for Building a Better Boyertown, as the recipient of the James K. Boyer Award, celebrating her dedication, leadership, and lasting positive impact on the Boyertown community.

APR
14

Tuesday, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

REACH Luncheon: Women at Work, Minds at Ease

Join us at this special REACH Luncheon in honor of Stress Awareness Month, focusing on stress management and mental health for busy professionals. This engaging event will feature a panel discussion facilitated by Annalisa Smithson of Unleashed Counseling, designed to provide practical strategies and meaningful insights for managing stress and maintaining overall wellness. Guests will enjoy a family-style meal at Bally Spring Inn, with an opportunity to continue the experience by taking a refreshing walk on the beautiful grounds after the luncheon concludes.

APR
30

Thursday, 5:00 PM - 8:30 PM

2026 TACC Annual Dinner

Enjoy an evening that begins with a cocktail networking reception featuring delicious hors d'oeuvres, followed by awards, dinner, and a dessert reception. Plus, don't miss out on our amazing gift basket raffle—sponsorship opportunities are available! More details to be announced!

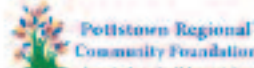
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REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP

PHOENIXVILLE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



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."



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

WHERE OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES, COMMUNITY, AND NON-PROFITS UNITE FOR CHANGE

BEE NETWORKING HAPPY HOUR | 2ND TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH | 5:30PM - 7:00PM

March 10, 2026

101 Bridge St #2, Phoenixville, PA 19460

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ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

March 18, 2026

5:30PM - 9:00PM



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

www.phoenixvillechamber.org

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 MEMBER!

Leadership Montco

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Sandra Edling 610-755-9410 www.leadershipmontco.org



PV Perks Cards – Shop Local & Save!

The 2026 PV Perks Card is here – your all-access pass to shop, dine and save local! For just \$10, enjoy **exclusive, multi-use offers** from favorite area restaurants, retailers, and service businesses. The PV Perks Card keeps dollars in our community while saving you money all year long.

Purchase online, then pickup up at the PV Chamber or have your cards mailed directly! www.PVChamber.net

View the full list of participating businesses and offers online at PVChamber.net.



Limited tickets and at www.PVChamber.net



JOIN THE HUNT!

Hometown Hunt 2026
A Community Scavenger Hunt
Across the Perkiomen Valley

Friday, March 27 | 6PM - 9PM

What is the Hometown Hunt?

Teams of 3-5 will travel in one car through the Perkiomen Valley using clues, creative challenges, and strategic thinking to uncover their next stop. You'll visit local businesses, complete fun tasks, and explore the community in a whole new way!

After-Party at The Flying Pig Tavern, Limerick!

Sponsorship and Ticket Information: www.PVchamber.net

PV Chamber Annual Membership Luncheon

Wednesday,
March 25, 2026

RiverCrest Golf Club & Preserve

Join us on March 25 for our Annual Membership Meeting, an opportunity to reflect, reconnect, and look ahead together.

This annual gathering is a chance to celebrate progress, recognize leadership, and gain insight into what's next for our organization and the business community we serve.

We hope you'll join us for this important and inspiring event.

Visit www.PVChamber.net for details and event schedule.

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 sfchamberofcommerce@gmail.com for more information on membership benefits and how to join. Let's grow together!



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!

Event Logistics:

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

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 inspeaking? Reach out to us at sfchamberofcommerce@gmail.com

14th ANNUAL FASHION SHOW

Join us for our 14th Annual Fashion Show Luncheon — an afternoon of style, sophistication, and community. We are proudly benefiting The Survivors Cancer Foundation. This event will include lunch, entertainment, fashion show, 50/50, gift card pull, basket raffles, local artisans and more!

HOST A SPRING-FORD CHAMBER HAPPY HOUR

Want to spotlight your business and connect with local professionals in a fun, relaxed setting? Now's your chance! The Spring-Ford Chamber is inviting members to host our monthly Networking Happy Hour.

Why host? Showcase your business to Chamber members • Build relationships in a casual, social environment • Gain extra promotion through Chamber emails, social media, and event listing

Host Investment: \$150.00 Hosting Fee — covers event promotion, location if not at your business and Chamber staffing.

Interested in Hosting? Email: sfchamberofcommerce@gmail.com

Claim your preferred month today!

Host a Women in Networking (WIN) Event!

Showcase your business. Build connections, Support women in business

The Spring-Ford Chamber invited members to **host one of our monthly Women in Networking (WIN) events!**

As a WIN Host, You Will:

- Provide the Venue — Host the event at your business or chosen location
- Offer Light Refreshments — Coffee, pastries, or snacks for guests
- Pay a \$100 Host Fee — This covers Chamber advertising and event promotion across email, social media, and our website
- Enjoy the Spotlight! — You'll have 5-10 minutes to introduce your business and share what you do.

Why Host a WIN Event? Gain visibility in the local business community • Reach new potential customers and partners • Support women's professional growth and empowerment • Be featured in Chamber promotions before and after the event

Interested in Hosting? Email: sfchamberofcommerce@gmail.com

SPRING-FORD CHAMBER PRESENTS OUR
14TH ANNUAL FASHION SHOW
THURSDAY
APRIL 9, 2026
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM TICKET PRICE: \$50

Registration and Sponsorships Available at www.springfordchamber.com

SPRING-FORD Chamber of Commerce **LUNCH & LEARN**
DISCOVERING & REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL IN 2026

COACH BOB KOCH

Thurs. 3/12
11:30am
Copperfield Inn
\$45

JOIN THE SPRING-FORD CHAMBER FOR A DYNAMIC LUNCH & LEARN FOCUSED ON HELPING PROFESSIONALS AND BUSINESS LEADERS REASSESS, REFOCUS, AND REALIGN THEIR GOALS FOR 2026.

ATTENDEES WILL EXPLORE:

- Clarifying priorities and direction for the remainder of 2026
- Recognizing strengths and growth opportunities
- Practical tools to elevate personal and professional performance

Register: www.springfordchamber.com **For more information:** sfchamberofcommerce@gmail.com 610-489-7200

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THE SBRA COMMUNITY

SO, WHAT IS YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION?



**By Gary Seibert, CEO,
Small Business Resource Association**

Did you ever stop to think about why you choose one gas station, one restaurant, one particular make of car, one brand of tooth paste or one of anything over another? A month ago, my wife and I drove almost an hour to go grocery

shopping at Trader Joe's in King of Prussia. We have plenty of grocery stores here, in Berks County, within ten minutes of our house. Instead, two hours of driving and \$13 of gas later we enjoyed our shopping experience at a grocery store that is one twentieth the size of Giant. What was it about Trader Joe's that enticed us to make that trip instead of shopping at Giant, Wise, Redner's, Aldi's or Kimberton? They're all good grocery stores.

Since the world began business owners have been in a battle trying to outdo their competitors. Price wars, better selection, bigger facilities, more modern ways of doing business, better trained staff, better locations, more marketing, better branding, give aways, loss leaders, mascots, catchy slogans, celebrity endorsements and the list goes on. The battle to win consumer loyalty and the cost associated with it has made many marketing companies very wealthy. It has also resulted in many small, mid-sized and large companies going out of business.

I believe that successful business owners take a deep look at their customer base, the product/service they are offering and their competition to find out what they need to do to be the business of choice in their customer's eyes.

They also need to be "top of mind" in their customers decision making process. This is known as understanding your **VALUE PROPOSITION**.

A value proposition is a concise, clear statement explaining why a customer should choose a product or service, highlighting its unique benefits and how it solves specific pain points. It differentiates a brand from competitors, focusing on value, not just features, to improve conversion rates. It is a critical marketing tool, often structured around a headline, sub-headline, and key, tangible benefits.

*Key Components of a value proposition —

- **HEADLINE:** Identifies the primary benefit and the main problem solved.
- **SUB-HEADLINE:** Explains the offering in detail - what for whom and why it's useful.
- **KEY FEATURES/BENEFITS:** Bullet points showcasing key advantages (e.g. speed, price, quality).
- **VISUALS:** Images that communicate the value proposition.

The **Value Proposition Canvas** is a tool used to ensure a product is centered around customer needs. It has two parts:

1. **CUSTOMER PROFILE:** Outlines customer jobs (tasks), pain (what annoys them), and benefits (what they want to achieve).
2. **VALUE MAP:** Outlines products/services, pain relievers (how to fix their problems), and gain creators (how you provide value).

How to differentiate your value proposition:

1. **FOCUS ON UNIQUENESS:** Highlight features that competitors do not have.
2. **TARGET SPECIFIC PAINS:** Address a pain point that competitors ignore.
3. **EMPHASIZE OUTCOME:** Focus on the result the customer gets, such as "faster service" or "more sustainability".
4. **USE DATA:** Support your claims with specific statistics and facts.

Two great examples of this are:

Coca-Cola—To provide refreshment and enjoyment to people of all ages and demographics worldwide. Nike—Inspiring and innovating for every athlete (defining "athlete" broadly as anyone with a body) by providing high quality, high performance, fashionable, and accessible athletic products, fostering an emotional connection through empowerment ("Just Do It"), and leveraging strong branding and technology to meet diverse needs from professional sports to everyday wear. Notice the difference between the two, Coke was short and to the point, Nike covered several values in their value proposition. Your VP does not have to be long.

Your Value Proposition is your "secret sauce" to success. If you do not have one, take a deeper look at your products and services, customer needs and competition. Find your Value Proposition and you will unlock the door to your future success. Without a VP, you are just another player in the game without anything to really attract customers. Here's a thought—you or one of your employees might just be your Value Proposition. There are places my wife and I frequent, mainly because of the owner and the people that work for them.

As for Trader Joe's, their value proposition made the trip well worth the time and gas it took to get there. We will go back again, and again, and again.



SBRA Business Spotlight



Reading Dermatology Associates

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Website: www.readingderm.com



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HOW TO LEVERAGE YOUR STRENGTHS IN HEALTH AND BUSINESS



By Dr. Bill Moss, Keystone Specific Chiropractic Center

In both healthcare and business, one fundamental question shapes outcomes: Are we focused on what is wrong or on what is right?

Traditional healthcare models are largely deficit-based. Meaning, we look for dysfunction, diagnose the problem, and attempt to fix it.

While necessary at times, true health is not merely the absence of symptoms. It is the optimal expression of function and coordination. Gallup's Clifton Strengths assessment applies to that same philosophy to leadership and organizational performance. Instead of asking, "What are your weaknesses?" it asks, "Where are you naturally strong?" Research consistently shows that individuals who use their strengths daily are more engaged, more productive, and more resilient under stress!

In business, leaders often fall into the trap of trying to become well-rounded. First, this sounds like a good idea. We become hyper focused on our weaknesses, and attempt to master every skill, manage every detail, and compensate for every perceived shortcoming. The result is often exhaustion and lack of growth.

A strengths-based model offers a more sustainable path in business and health.

When leaders understand how they are wired, they can design their roles around high-impact activities that energize them. Instead of spending their time in areas that drain them, they focus on uplifting pursuits.

The same principle applies to teams.

At Keystone Specific Chiropractic Center, we use CliftonStrengths with every employee. It shapes how we hire, how we assign responsibilities, and how we develop leaders. Rather than forcing uniformity, we intentionally build complementary strengths into our organization.

Some team members naturally excel at details and processes. Others thrive in connection and communication. Others are wired for execution and momentum. When each person is positioned according to their strengths, engagement increases and harmony exists between our practice and clients.

More importantly, it changes the healthcare experience we deliver.

Patients can feel the difference when a team is operating in alignment. Front desk interactions are warmer. Systems are smoother. Communication is clearer. Care is consistent. A strength-aligned team creates a more stable, confident environment that is especially valuable in healthcare, where trust and clarity matter.

This approach also reshapes how we view stress. When individuals consistently operate outside their strengths, stress compounds. Decision fatigue rises. Morale declines. When people work in alignment with how they are designed, effort becomes more sustainable. Energy expands rather than depletes.

In chiropractic, we emphasize neurological alignment because a properly functioning nervous system allows the body to adapt to physical, chemical, and emotional stress more effectively. Strength's alignment in business works similarly. When leaders and teams operate according to their design, they adapt better to market pressures and growth challenges.

For business owners, three practical steps can help:

1. Shift from deficit-based thinking to strength-based strategy.
2. Design roles around talent, not just job descriptions.
3. Build teams with complementary strengths rather than identical profiles.

You cannot outperform misalignment indefinitely. Whether in health or in business, sustainable growth begins by identifying what is right, developing it, and building your systems around it.

Alignment is not just a wellness principle. It is a leadership advantage.

SBRA Monthly Member Shout Out

Members Helping Each Other Grow



www.core1marketing.com



www.rbinsuranceservice.com



www.cafefolino.com



www.powermarketinginternational.com

SBRA EVENTS

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

- Breakfast Referral Club – March 6th at B2 Bistro
- SBRA Networking Mingle – March 25th

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THE CHANGING LEGAL LANDSCAPE



LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

By Levi S. Wolf,
Esquire, Wolf,
Baldwin &
Associates, P.C.

I started practicing law thirty years ago, in 1996, but since my father started the law firm in 1973, I have been in and around the legal landscape for basically all of my life. I have seen dramatic changes, and the pace of change is only increasing.

When I was a kid in the '70s, I watched my father dictate letters to his secretary, who would take shorthand and then type the letter on a typewriter onto onionskin paper with literal carbon paper to keep the file copy. Correspondence was of course sent by regular mail, and responses were not expected inside of three to four weeks.

In the '80s, our firm was an early adopter of computerized word processing. We had Radio Shack TRS-80 computers and dot matrix printers, which speeded up the accuracy and ease of creating documents, but the speed of correspondence was still limited by the U.S. Postal Service, or physically driving to the courthouse to file

papers. Computer capabilities increased over time with the advent of IBM-compatible machines and Windows, creating greater efficiencies, but the speed of correspondence and the pace of most litigation was not much altered.

The speed of correspondence did drastically increase with the advent of fax machines, but not every attorney early on even had a fax machine, and service of legal paperwork still needed to be accomplished by mail or by physically filing papers at the courthouse.

Legal research throughout the '70s, '80s, and '90s was similarly primitive by today's standards. Our firm maintained a comprehensive law library, at considerable cost. Legal research required going to physical books, of course, and maintaining the books with regular updates. Legal treatises, case law reporters, and form books might be easier found in a law library than a private small office. Eventually, all of those books were condensed onto CD-ROM discs, and a CD tower of five discs contained libraries' worth of digitally searchable information, marking a sea change in the speed and accuracy of legal research.

(Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 35)

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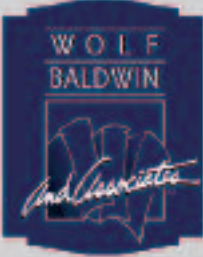









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Communication, however, was still slow. Even when I started practicing law myself in 1996, I was able to dictate correspondence to my legal assistant, who would type up a draft, provide it to me for review, I would either approve it or make changes and send it back to the assistant to print out and put in the mail. We had computers, but no ethernet network. File sharing was by so-called sneakernet: sharing floppy disks between computers. Even though faxes were common, they were generally reserved for urgent communication. Most lawyers still did not expect responses to letters back-and-forth between counsel inside of thirty days. Paper such as correspondence, pleadings, and memos were maintained in a file folder, and you needed to have that file physically in front of you to work on it. We lugged paper files to court in multiple briefcases and boxes if necessary. PDF scanning was in its infancy.

The internet was a true game-changer, both for preparing and filing documents, and for increasing the speed of communication with e-mail. Clients and opposing counsel over time revised their expectations about how long a response should reasonably take. Still, not every law firm adopted e-mail right away, and those of us who were early adopters were easily frustrated by those we perceived as dinosaurs who did not even have e-mail addresses, much less websites.

Now, a lawyer who does not use e-mail is unheard of. Not all lawyers respond to e-mails quickly, especially if they are tied up in court or have to work on massive projects like a Supreme Court brief, but responses can be routinely expected within a few days rather than a month. Of course, with e-mail on our phones in our pockets, many responses now are practically instantaneous, even if we are not in the office sitting in front of our computers. E-filing has now for years eliminated the lag of mailing documents to the court for filing.

The prevalence of the internet also has allowed for access to vast libraries of information, without the need to maintain many paper books or CDs, all searchable instantaneously, with hyperlinked cross-references and secondary sources and commentaries readily available. Case management software, scanning documents, e-mail, and cloud-based computing have allowed us to work from home and have access to all of our file materials without ever touching a paper file.

All of these advancements molded and shaped the practice of law, some quickly, and some more slowly. All have increased the efficiency of lawyers. Clients may wonder, with all of this technological advancement, why do cases not move more quickly? The answer is that all of these advancements

have just been tools, and the real practice of law does not happen on computers, it happens in lawyers' brains, and in compliance with court rules, where precious little happens quickly.

For instance, it takes time and careful consideration to prepare legal pleadings, and it is not a job which should be rushed. It takes time to develop discovery. It takes even more time to analyze documents and synthesize them, and more time to develop effective legal arguments and witness testimony. It takes time to write an effective and persuasive legal brief.

Today, AI is another tool in the lawyer's toolbox which has not yet been adopted by all lawyers, but many more are getting on board every day. Like the progression from the pen to the typewriter to the word processor to today's e-mail ubiquity, and like the evolution from printed books to internet legal research, it is not a matter of if all attorneys will eventually adopt AI, but when, and judges too.

However, AI is still merely a tool. A useful tool, to be sure, and those lawyers who are late to the party will quickly find themselves being left behind. But AI is not a substitute for a lawyer's professional experience, skill, or judgment. Undeniably it can help with certain tasks, but its work product must be carefully reviewed by a skilled professional. One only needs to read the news to see glaring examples of how litigants, even attorneys, are being sanctioned almost daily for using non-legal specific AI tools to generate legal arguments, in which the AI has "hallucinated" a legal citation which was not double-checked by the human "author" of the legal document. Laypeople who believe that they can become armchair lawyers by utilizing AI will be sorely mistaken, and might get themselves in serious trouble.

Taking certain tasks from being the primary responsibility of the attorney, like reviewing 300-page contracts for changes, or scanning deposition transcripts or thousands of pages of medical records for key points, or generating the first draft of a letter or legal brief, will undoubtedly free up attorneys for more human tasks such as complex strategizing and client counseling. Nevertheless, attorneys will find themselves spending time also double-checking the AI's work, especially as the technology is still so new.

Forgive me a trip down memory lane. It will be fascinating to see what comes next.

Levi S. Wolf, Esquire is a shareholder in the law firm of Wolf, Baldwin & Associates, P.C. with offices in Pottstown, Reading, Pennsburg, and West Chester. He is certified as a specialist in the practice of workers' compensation law by the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Section on Workers' Compensation Law as authorized by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Mr. Wolf can be reached at 610.323.7436 or by e-mail to LWolf@wolfbaldwin.com.

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Penn State Berks is proud to celebrate its rich history in engineering during National Engineers Week, February 23-27, 2026. The college will host events for students, alumni and community members, including its inaugural Pinewood Derby Competition on Wednesday, February 25, starting at 5 p.m., in the lobby of the Gage Technology and Business Innovation Building. For more information or to register, visit berks.psu.edu/engineersweek. Recently, Penn State Berks announced a new initiative, The Manufacturing Innovation and Learning Lab (MILL) at Penn State Berks, and a new bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Business with Engineering Studies. Both have the potential to make an even greater impact on the region and beyond.

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INTERPRETIVE: SHAKEUP IN GOVERNMENT FUNDING



DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT By Barry Cassidy

While administering programs in the City of Philadelphia, I had access to many potential funding sources and did my best to secure all available funds so we were not reliant on a single source, and program delivery could proceed without interruption. A few months ago, I wrote about cost allocation and its effect on staffing.

I will address the effects the client's end has on the same process. The number of people receiving assistance is now under review across the federal funding landscape. People are being asked to prove their eligibility, and there is a lot of fraud because underwriting was loose concerning which documents are accepted.

Many of the programs are per-client reimbursement programs, and it would be like working on a piecework rate. A program like weatherization was on a per-project reimbursement basis. So, to add to the complexity, programs have different funding mechanisms. To contrast with the weatherization example, something like mortgage counseling has no per-person requirement if it is a strictly program-delivery grant.

All of these cuts directly affect the number of people employed by individual nonprofits. Seeing the reaction, I would think this has gone beyond eliminating "merit" employees to the value-added "political" employees, leaving people in

jobs that, in many cases, are beyond their capacity. Some of these people did not even do the work allocated through the grant cost allocation formula. People who have had this "power"...maybe a better word, "edge" in the political hierarchy are starting to realize that tough times lie ahead.

In the Manuscripts of 1844, Marx defines humans as a "species-being" (Gattungswesen) whose nature is to be free, conscious, and creative producers. Capitalism reduces this unique human capacity to a mere tool for individual survival, effectively dehumanizing the worker and reducing them to the level of an animal or a machine.

The reality of capitalism, adapting the theory of noblesse oblige (the notion that privileged people have an inferred responsibility to act with generosity and nobility toward those less privileged), through donations to a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, is not enough to sustain the bloated program delivery process. They need government money.

What you are watching is the dismantling of a social program delivery process at its roots, not like Reagan did by renaming things and switching agency names. People have to find real jobs in the private sector.

The associate's degree in art history is unlikely to be very helpful, as many cultural agencies are cutting back. Sometimes, practicing idealism through cronyism is a devastating combination and has long-lasting effects on your ability to get through it.

(Continued on page 40)

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DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from page 39)

Recently, HUD has notified landlords and public housing authorities that, in addition to the 200,000 tenants requiring additional eligibility verification, it had also identified nearly 25,000 deceased renters and 6,000 “ineligible non-American tenants” receiving federal aid, the agency announced. It has given housing authorities and landlords 30 days to take corrective action or face sanctions.

In this case, there may be winners in the client game and no losers in the administrative apparatus. Some people are eligible but cannot access the benefits of living in public housing and are on a waiting list. In this case, the only loser is the person who fits the exclusionary criteria outlined by HUD. Real low-income people, not “connected” people, will win.

Each instance is independent, but in some cases, it is combined with another program(s), and the term “outreach worker” becomes the kiss of death. It would be difficult to estimate what the ultimate effect of all these changes will be, and which agencies are going to significantly change their operations

The foundations are holding workshops to determine priorities. The funding focus is shifting from DEI, which was the holy grail of funding a couple of years ago,

to a trend toward client monetary passthrough rather than funding an outreach worker. The world of relief is in flux. I detect a change in culture as vocations are re-examined, and people move toward being a “gig worker/side hustle” employee. The glorification of becoming a delivery person or a chauffeur will reach an all-time high. If only to be free, conscious, and creative producers in the service industry.

Even jobs dealing drugs are becoming more difficult as the crackdown on crime reminds me of when I was growing up in the late '50s with Broadrick Crawford's series *Highway Patrol*. The bad guys are on the run.

There are jobs that are funded by foreign sources to create unrest in America. Government sources are homing in on those as I write this article. I suspect that many of the nonprofits involved will lose their 501 (c) (3) status, and those jobs will dry up. Without a nonprofit to launder the money, those people are guilty of being agents of a foreign government.

These cuts are not random; it is an orchestrated effort. A very well-organized and effective effort. I have never seen something this thorough before.

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

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HOBART'S RUN, POTTSTOWN FOUNDATION INCENTIVIZE HOMEOWNERSHIP, PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH JUNE 30

Hobart's Run and the Pottstown Regional Community Foundation are partnering to expand the Hobart's Run Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP) for a limited time. The collaboration extends eligibility to the entire Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) district between Beech Street and Industrial Highway, near the Charles W. Dickinson Transportation Center and the proposed Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority light rail station.

Through June 30, 2026, qualified homebuyers in either the Hobart's Run focus area or the designated half-mile ETOD district may receive \$6,000 toward closing costs and purchase expenses — double the program's usual \$3,000 award. Applicants must not have owned a home within the past two years and must be transitioning from renting to homeownership. Approved recipients must occupy the home as their primary residence.

While all eligible buyers are encouraged to apply, priority will be given to long-term Pottstown renters with established local tenancy. Recipients must complete first-time homebuyer and financial literacy education. Applications are available at hobartsrun-pottstown.org/property-pride, and closings must occur by June 30, 2026.

At the same time, Hobart's Run will temporarily increase its Façade Improvement Grant (FIG) awards. Normally \$500, FIG grants will rise to \$1,500 through June 30 for eligible residents in the Hobart's Run focus area. The increase, made possible by a \$36,000 Foundation grant funding the expanded HIP

awards, allows more substantial curb appeal improvements. All projects must be completed by June 30.

The Foundation's grant supports sustainable improvements in a key section of downtown Pottstown, strengthening vitality and stability in the ETOD neighborhood.

"With the Foundation's collaboration, we are enhancing housing stability and quality of life near the proposed transit corridor and in our focus area," said Alyssa Slade, Executive Director of Community Engagement and Economic Development for Hobart's Run. She noted the effort helps prevent displacement that could accompany renewed rail service by supporting long-time residents and preserving existing housing stock.

Howard Brown, Senior Program Officer for the Foundation, emphasized that strategic housing investment tied to potential passenger rail service can promote inclusive economic growth, expand access to affordable housing and living-wage jobs, and ensure long-time residents remain in their neighborhoods.

Since launching HIP in 2019, Hobart's Run has awarded \$55,000 to 11 residents. The FIG program has provided more than \$18,000 for home improvements.

Founded in 2016 by The Hill School, Hobart's Run is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working within a 900-parcel focus area to promote neighborhood pride, inclusive engagement, homeownership, and sustainable commercial development, while supporting broader revitalization across Pottstown.



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DEADLINE FAST APPROACHING TO IMPLEMENT NACHA RULE CHANGES FOR ACH TRANSACTIONS



By Carolann Westendorp, JBT Bank

The March 20, 2026 deadline for implementing National Automated Clearing House Association (NACHA) rule changes regarding Automated Clearing House (ACH) transactions is nearly here and businesses should be aware of the new requirements.

The updated changes are intended to improve clarity, consistency, and transparency across the ACH network. Compliance with the NACHA ACH rule changes is mandatory and transactions that do not meet the new requirements may experience processing delays or other issues.

As a resource for small businesses regarding the new NACHA ACH rule changes, JBT (Jonestown Bank & Trust Co.) has a page on our website devoted to these changes. Visit <https://www.jbt.bank/nacha-rule-change-for-ach-transactions/>

What do businesses need to do to comply with the rule changes? Effective March 20, NACHA requires the standardized use of specific transaction descriptions for certain ACH entries:

- ACH credits related to wages must use the description "PAYROLL"
- ACH debits related to e-commerce purchases must use the description "PURCHASE"

This requirement applies to all commercial originators that initiate these types of ACH transactions. The goal of using standardized descriptions is to help improve transaction identification, reconciliation, and transparency for both originators and recipients.

To help ensure a smooth transition for your business it's a good idea to review

and update ACH templates and internal processes. It's also important to contact your payroll, accounting, or software provider to confirm updates.

In addition to the standardized ACH descriptions, the new NACHA rule also includes ACH fraud monitoring requirements. Business ACH Originators will be required to use risk-based processes to identify potentially fraudulent ACH transactions.

This means having processes in place to detect fraud due to unauthorized entries that are the result of account takeover, an example of which would be a cybercriminal stealing legitimate banking credentials and gaining access to initiate unauthorized ACH transfers to steal funds.

Risk-based processes should also have the ability to detect payments approved under false pretenses as a result of business email compromise, vendor impersonation, or payroll impersonation.

According to NACHA, the required actions that need to be taken by ACH originators when it comes to fraud detection include:

- Establishing procedures to identify high-risk ACH entries
- Reviewing and updating those procedures at least annually
- Assessing transaction risk and applying monitoring where risk is highest

You can also find fraud prevention tips and examples of scams targeting businesses at JBT's Fraud Resources page <https://www.jbt.bank/fraud-resource/>

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