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Geyer Auction Companies



***A Regional Leader
in Asset Liquidation***

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Read Andi's story and learn more about the life-saving care offered at Pottstown Hospital.

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Andi & Cory



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PHOTO BY STEVE LADNER PHOTOGRAPHY

Cover Story: *Geyer Auction Companies of Gilbertsville has spent more than 70 years helping homeowners, estates and businesses across the Mid-Atlantic maximize value through trusted real estate, estate, vehicle and business liquidation auctions.*



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to grow your business,
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money local.

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LEADING THE NEXT GENERATION FORWARD

EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING SUPPORTED
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
HIGH SCHOOL · COLLEGE · FIRST-TIME EMPLOYEES

The leadership gap is real, and it starts earlier than we think

The world our young people are inheriting demands more than academic credentials. It demands self-awareness, resilience, emotional intelligence, agility and the ability to communicate, collaborate, and lead under pressure. The disruption of COVID-19 left an entire generation with widened gaps in social and emotional development, confidence, and interpersonal skills.

At Global Prism-EquuSmart, we believe closing that gap requires intentional, experiential leadership development, that starts in high school so that the next generation enters the workforce not just qualified, but truly ready to lead.

Why Horses?

Horses are extraordinarily perceptive animals that respond to the emotional and energetic signals of the people around them, making them powerful, non-judgmental mirrors for human behavior. In Equine Assisted Learning, students engage in guided, ground-based activities (**no riding required**) that reveal how they communicate, recognize and manage their emotions, establish trust, and influence others. The lessons are immediate, visceral, and deeply memorable in ways a classroom simply cannot replicate. EAL is uniquely powerful for adolescents and young adults navigating identity and leadership.



The EquuSmart Leadership Academy

The EquuSmart Leadership Academy is a progressive, multi-stage program that follows the participants' growth from 9th grade through the first years of the workforce. Learning comprises self-assessments, interactive classroom workshops, executive coaching, and immersive, ground-based Equine Assisted Learning sessions.

The Academy is designed to meet students where they are. It is available as a dedicated program for a specific school, college, or organization; as open enrollment cohorts welcoming students of the right age from across the region; and as a purposeful complement to homeschool curricula.

For homeschooling families who already prioritize intentional, values-driven education, the Academy offers something you can't find in a textbook: peer cohort connection, social-emotional growth, and real-world leadership skill building in a supportive, nature-based environment. Programs are available in half-day, full-day, and multi-session formats designed to fit homeschool schedules and learning goals.

Leadership is not a title, it is a practice.

The earlier young people begin that practice, the stronger, more self-aware, and more capable adults they become.

Contact us to explore what the EquuSmart Leadership Academy can do for the young leader in your life.



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Geyer Auction Companies

A Regional Leader in Asset Liquidation

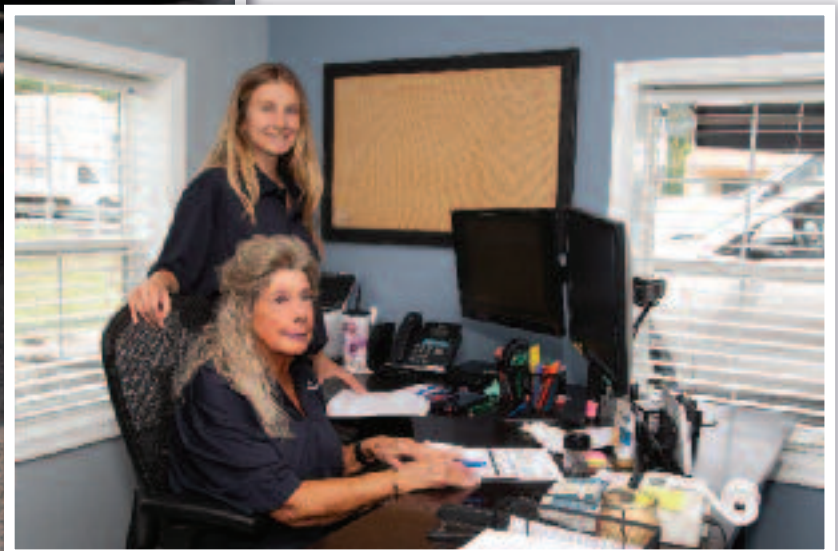


MARK AKINS



By Kathy Hunt

The act of selling property to the highest bidder, or auctioning, has existed for at least 2,000 years. In their earliest days, these public sales featured the assets of debtors, the spoils of war, enslaved people, and unmarried women. By the 1600s, auctions had expanded their offerings to include livestock, crops, textiles, furs and pelts, art, books, farm equipment, and farms themselves. The world's first and oldest auction house, Stockholms Auktionsverk, was founded during this period in Sweden. Less than 100 years later, Sotheby's and Christie's opened their doors in London. Christie's currently ranks as the world's largest auction house specializing in fine art and luxury items, followed by Sotheby's.



Paige Heid and Linda Marie Mullis

PHOTOS BY STEVE LADNER PHOTOGRAPHY



Ken Geyer leading a real estate auction – circa 1993

Not to be outdone by its European counterparts, Southeastern Pennsylvania has its own venerable auction house, Geyer Auction Companies of Gilbertsville. Founded in 1955 by Ken Geyer, the family-run business initially focused its efforts on real estate in the Mid-Atlantic region. Need to sell residential, industrial/commercial, agricultural, urban, and rural real estate in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, or New York? Geyer Auction Companies was, and still is, the business to contact.



Ken Geyer

Considered one of the leading auctioneers in the U.S., Ken Geyer was named Pennsylvania's "Auctioneer of the Year" in 1993. When Geyer passed away six years later, his nephew and protégé, Mark Akins, took over the role of company president. The high level of integrity and unwavering dedication to clients have continued under Akins.

"I like to treat every auction like I'm selling my mom's stuff and what's best for my mom," Akins said.

With more than 30,000 active bidders, 50,000 email subscribers, and 55,000 followers on social media, Akins and his 14-member staff are able to cast a wide net for their clients. Their efforts certainly pay off. In 2025, the business sold over \$23.5 million in assets through online and in-person auctions. Today, over 70 years after its founding, Geyer Auction Companies is a regional leader in real estate auctions and business liquidations.

Always in demand, real estate and estate auctions

As you might expect from an auction house that got its start with real estate, property auctions are among Geyer Auction's most popular services. Paige Heid, the director of operations at Geyer Auction Companies and Akin's daughter, noted that, within real estate auctions, estate sales are their flagship.

Anyone who has ever acted as the executor of a family member's or friend's estate knows that this can be a challenging and exhausting duty. Sorting through a



THE TEAM

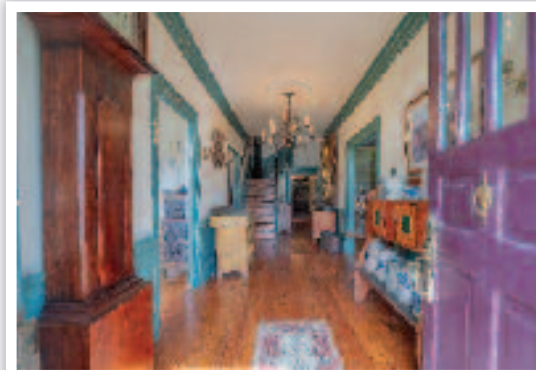
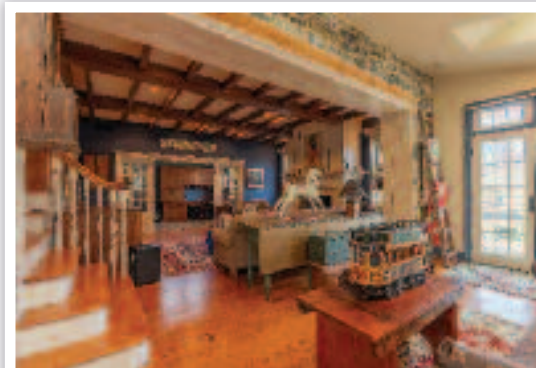
lifetime of personal possessions. Donating furniture, appliances, and more before preparing to sell the deceased's property. All of this takes a tremendous amount of time and effort. Fortunately, Geyer Auction Companies is known for its effortless and transparent estate auctions, enabling an executor to hand off the literal heavy lifting to the experienced Geyer team.

As with real estate auctions, setting up an estate auction begins with a free, no-obligation consultation. A visit to the site is made to evaluate the property and its contents and to draft the proposed terms of the auction. Once a contract has been signed, a Geyer associate creates an auction strategy that best serves the seller's situation. Before any marketing campaigns begin, a team from Geyer cleans, photographs, and catalogs the inventory. Two open houses are then scheduled to stimulate interest and draw in bidders.

Once the auction has taken place, Geyer takes care of removing any remaining items on the property. The team may even broom-sweep the site so that it is pristine and ready for settlement.

A typical estate sale consists of one property. It takes roughly 45 days to hold the auction and then 45 days for the settlement to go through, Heid said. Presently, Geyer is working on a large estate package that contains six properties. Heid estimated that this will take roughly four months to complete.

(Continued on page 8)



Geyer cleans, photographs, and catalogs the inventory.

(Continued from page 7)

"With estate auctions, it's a total package. We streamline the entire process by handling everything from real estate to personal property," Heid said. "If a house has been neglected or need some updating, it's best for us to sell the property as-is, which alleviates any contingencies or delays in the closing process."

Geyer has two full-time, licensed auctioneers and contracts additional auctioneers when needed. Due to the high volume of real estate and estate auctions, the company works with realtor Danielle Kline, with Realty ONE Group Restore, who assists with listing and showing the properties.

Specialists in business liquidations as well as real estate

Geyer Auction covers not only real estate and estate sales but also business liquidations; municipality and fleet liquidations; vehicle, equipment, and tool auctions; real estate pre-foreclosures; and high-end



antiques. Because the demand for older objects and collectibles has waned over the past 15 to 20 years, antiques only account for about 15 percent of Geyer's business, Heid said.

In addition to its real estate auctions, business liquidation is a highly sought-after service at Geyer. A liquidation occurs when a business becomes insolvent and must sell its commercial assets — real estate, equipment, vehicles, inventory, intellectual property, and any other business-related items that the company owns — to pay off its creditors. It may also happen when an owner nears retirement and wants to get rid of old office

furniture, equipment, and more. An auction avoids time-consuming, individual sales of assets and enables the business owner to quickly monetize inventory, equipment, and the like.

One of Geyer's successful business liquidation auctions involved a construction company with over 50 years' worth of surplus equipment and inventory. The company wanted to convert these extra assets into cash, so it contacted Geyer Auction Companies. Through the work of its skilled auctioneers, Geyer sold over 1,000 lots at auction, bringing in more than \$660,000 for its client.

"We do a lot of construction companies, warehouses, and hardware stores, all of which involve considerable logistics. Often, we need heavy machinery and a forklift on site for setting up and picking up," Heid said. "Our staff handles everything so clients can just hand over the keys and not have to be a part of that process."

She added that Geyer will hold another large business liquidation in August. Further details can be found later in this article, under the heading "Major auction events in August," and on the company website, <https://www.geyerauctions.com/>.



Auctioning a wide range of vehicles

Another service that gets considerable attention is Geyer's vehicle auctions. These events offer a quick, convenient way for the general public and auto dealerships to dispose of unwanted or extra automobiles. Classic and family cars, commercial trucks and vans, RVs, motorcycles, and trailers are all part of these as-is sales events. Business and municipality fleet liquidations also factor into its vehicle auctions.

Before being accepted into an auction, the vehicles are evaluated by a member of the Geyer team. After the initial assessment, the automobiles are cleaned and prepped and then marketed online and in print.

Heid noted that dirty vehicles bring in significantly less money than those that are clean and tidy. For municipality fleets, Geyer can remove any decals or other branding on the vehicles. The company also has a mechanic on site who can perform minor repairs, such as changing a battery or replacing a fluid line, before a vehicle is put up for sale.

At the end of 2025, Geyer Auction premiered its Gilbertsville Public Auto Auction. Held at the former location of Zern's Farmers Market, at 1100 E. Philadelphia Avenue in Gilbertsville, the auction is open to the public as well as to auto dealers. Bidding is done online or in-person, and on-site sales are simulcast. As with any of its auctions, Geyer assures maximum transparency throughout the process.

On the day of the auction, prospective buyers can check out the vehicles from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Bidding begins at 5 p.m. Winning bidders must put down a \$500 deposit and pay the balance in full when they pick up their vehicles.

Along with the Gilbertsville Public Auto Auction, Geyer has two vehicle auction sites in Bechtelsville. For the past nine months, it has run two auctions per month for Tri-County Toyota, in 15 D and L Drive in Royersford. Held at the dealership, these events provide an efficient route for selling dealer trade-in vehicles.



"We believe that the auction method is best way to sell almost anything," Heid said. "You have a large enough buyer pool so you're getting the maximum price that someone is willing to pay for that item."

A bit about pre-foreclosure auctions

Out of all Geyer Auction Companies' services, the one with which the public might be less familiar is a pre-foreclosure auction. The online real estate marketplace Zillow defines pre-foreclosure as the time between when a homeowner receives a notice of default and the home/property is sold at auction. Generally, a notice of default is issued after a borrower has not made a mortgage payment in more than 120 days.

"Pre-foreclosure is a path forward for homeowners who face foreclosure. Heid said. "They still have a little bit of power and so, before they go to foreclosure, we work with them to sell their property. It is a way to regain control of their finances, pay off any debt, and recover any equity in the house."

To eliminate the need for inspections and the possibility of buyer contingencies, Geyer auctions this type of real estate as-is. Its team works at an accelerated pace and ensures that the pre-foreclosed property sells on a fixed date, before the bank moves to take possession of the home.

Similar to traditional real estate auctions, the winning bidder of a pre-foreclosure supplies an immediate, non-refundable deposit. After that, Geyer handles all the details for closing on the property.

Heid added that Geyer has worked with several banks on pre-foreclosures. As long as the financial lenders understand that Geyer is actively working to sell the property, banks tend to be a bit more lenient. They may even allow additional time for Geyer to assist the delinquent homeowner.

Major auction events in August

For prospective buyers interested in cars, real estate, or tools and equipment, August promises to be an exceptional month for auctions. On August 5, Geyer is holding a new car dealer trade-in auction at Tri-County Toyota. The next day, August 6, the monthly Gilbertsville Public Auto Auction takes place. Later in the month, on August 23, a classic car and NOS auto parts auction occurs in Manalapan, New Jersey.

Anyone looking for real estate will want to note that on August 13, a live auction will be held for three properties on Maugers Mill Road in Pottstown. The listings are for a four-bedroom, two-bath home on .54 acres, a three-bedroom, two-bath home on 4.31 acres, and a vacant parcel of 9.32 acres. Five days later, on August 18, a 4-bedroom, 1-bath home will be auctioned in Gilbertsville.

Near the end of August, Geyer holds the Brightline Construction auction in Philadelphia. Previews and inspection of the heavy construction and concrete company's tools and equipment take place on August 20 and August 25. Online bidding closes on August 26 at 4 p.m.



For additional information about these events or to schedule a free, no-obligation consultation, visit <https://www.geyerauctions.com/>, email mark@geyerauctions.com, or call 215.326.9624.

CELEBRATING NATIONAL GOLF MONTH

Where Business and Recreation Meet on the Fairway

Throughout Montgomery, Chester, and Berks Counties, the Route 422, Route 100, Route 202, and Route 30 corridors have become synonymous with economic growth, attracting businesses of every size while offering an exceptional quality of life. Among the many amenities that make the region attractive to professionals and companies alike is an outstanding collection of public golf destinations that continue to play an important role in both business and community life.

For generations, the golf course has been one of the most effective places to build relationships. A round of golf offers something today's fast-paced business world often lacks—uninterrupted time. Conversations develop naturally, ideas are exchanged without distraction, and partnerships are often strengthened between the first tee and the final putt. Whether entertaining clients, recognizing employees, or hosting a company outing, golf remains a valuable extension of the boardroom.

Today's golf facilities, however, have evolved far beyond the traditional 18-hole experience. Many have become year-round destinations that welcome golfers, families, businesses, and community organizations alike. Dining, special events, weddings, charitable fundraisers, leagues, live entertainment, and private gatherings have transformed these venues into vibrant centers of activity that contribute to the local economy while bringing people together.

The region's convenient highway network makes these destinations easily accessible from every direction, allowing businesses and organizations to host events without lengthy travel. Their continued success also benefits nearby restaurants, hotels, retailers, and countless charitable organizations that rely on golf outings and special events to support their missions.

In the pages that follow, we spotlight three facilities that represent the diversity of golf opportunities found throughout the Route 422 region. The Loft at

Sweet Water has grown from a nine-hole public course into a destination that combines golf, dining, special events, and a beautifully restored historic venue. ArrowHead Golf Course continues to welcome golfers of every skill level while providing an ideal setting for corporate outings, leagues, and fundraising events. Twin Ponds Golf Course, a family-owned favorite for more than six decades, blends challenging golf with charitable events and community gatherings in a scenic Montgomery County setting.

Whether your goal is to entertain clients, reward employees, organize a fundraiser, celebrate a special occasion, or simply enjoy an afternoon outdoors, these three destinations demonstrate why golf continues to be an enduring part of doing business—and building community—throughout southeastern Pennsylvania.



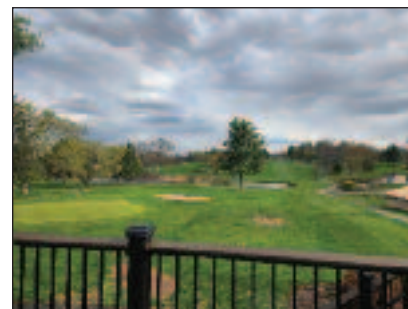
Twin Ponds Golf Course

Twin Ponds Golf Course, a cherished, family-owned destination nestled in western Montgomery County is one of PA's best kept secrets. At 5,646 yards of golf from the longest tees for a par 70, the course features seven water holes and many well bunkered undulating greens which will challenge even the best golfers yet satisfy players of all abilities.

For over 60 years, Twin Ponds has been a place where families, friends, and organizations come together. Recently, the family proudly unveiled their brand-new deck, offering sweeping views of the course's scenic landscape. The new 900-foot deck enhances the experience for golfers and guests alike, providing a relaxing space to take in the beauty that has made Twin Ponds a local favorite for generations. This space gives everyone a new way to enjoy the course — whether you're finishing a round, attending an event, or simply taking in the view.



In addition to daily play, Twin Ponds proudly hosts dozens of charitable outings each season, reinforcing its long-standing commitment to giving back and bringing people together. Whether you are a golfer or not, a great way to experience the course would be to attend one of their "Twinnies on the Deck" parties which runs one Friday each month from 6pm-9pm with live music and food/beverage for purchase. Up-coming events include Friday, July 24, August 21 and September 25. Come visit this "hidden gem".



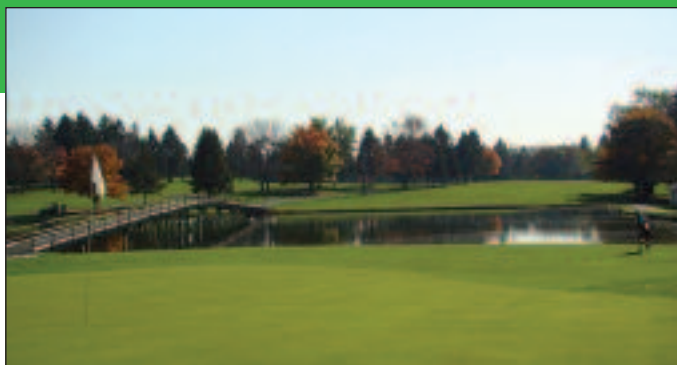


Twin Ponds Golf Course

One of PA's best kept secrets . . .



The Clubhouse opens daily, Monday-Friday at 7am and Saturday and Sundays at 6am.
We only accept cash. ATM on site.
Please call for tee times at
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www.twinpondsgolf.com
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Arrowhead Golf Club

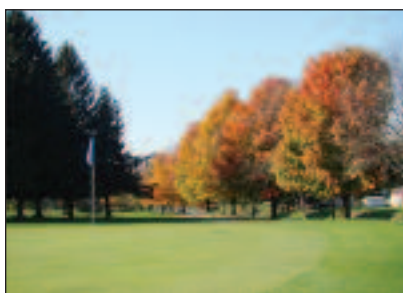
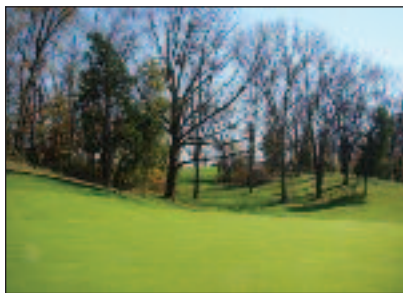
Arrowhead Golf Club, a mature and challenging public golf course with 27 meticulously maintained holes nestled in a serene woodland setting, is conveniently located in Douglassville, just five minutes from the intersection of Routes 422 and 662 North at 1539 Weavertown Road.

There is a fully stocked Pro Shop at Arrowhead Golf Course. You can buy anything from the golf balls and golfing supplies you need in order to play a round to the clubs, bags, clothing, and accessories that you need to either begin the sport or upgrade your tools of the trade.

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

Having an outing for your business, or a fundraiser for your favorite organization? Arrowhead has plenty of room for social and industrial leagues, daytime and evening. The course can accommodate up to 200 golfers, playing on 18 holes with carts, or more players if some are willing to walk. The covered pavilion has three open sides, and will seat up to 150 people. The use of the pavilion is available at no charge. You are welcome to bring your own food or outside catering for your event.

You are invited to visit Arrowhead and find out why they are one of the leading



public golf courses in Southeastern Pennsylvania. If you would like information about outings or anything they have for sale, please call Arrowhead at 610.582.4258. And visit Arrowhead online at www.arrowheadgolf.net.

Valerie McLean Keller, Owner & Operator

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Greens Fees: Weekends — \$38.00 to Walk • \$51.00 to Ride

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www.golfsweetwater.com

The Loft at Sweet Water

Your Home for Great Golf, Food, and Special Events

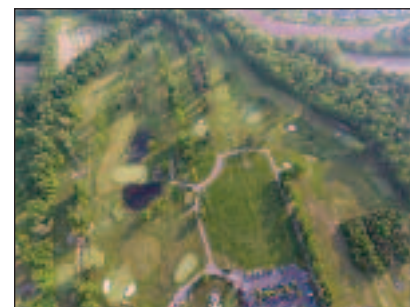
The Loft at Sweet Water is much more than just an event space. We actually got started with just a great nine-hole golf course, but over the years it's turned into so much more. We renovated an incredible 1800's barn into the perfect event space for elegant wedding, banquets, and private events. You wanted more, so we opened a restaurant with a one-of-a-kind 'Self Serve Beer Wall' so you can pour over 30 types of beer/wine until your heart's content. Please make sure you bring a designated driver! Locals and visitors alike proudly rate us "5 Stars" and have spread the word that our facilities are the place to be! We'll make your day special, whether you're simply looking to golf, have an outing, grab some local grub, or host a private or special event. Come see what we're about! You won't be sorry...

A Premier Wedding Venue

With magnificent indoor and outdoor settings, The Loft at Sweet Water, located in Pennsburg, PA offers spectacular views for your special occasion. Our 1800's barn has been beautifully restored to provide just the right touch of elegance and charm. The outdoor terrace wraps around the entire Loft, providing picturesque views of the garden, waterfall, and landscape. Photo opportunities are plentiful, helping to ensure your day is remembered forever.

Special Events

Give your dinner party or special event that extra touch of class by having a personal chef prepare your personalized selections. We offer a range of formats, menu selections, and services as part of my party and events service. We can accommodate any special request, and will deliver an experience your guests will talk about for weeks. Don't take my word for it, contact us for your next party or event, and let's make culinary magic together.



Golf Course Information

Sweet Water golf course is a public 9 Hole golf course. It measures 2777 yards from the men's tees, and plays to a Par of 36 with two Par 5's, one of them being the 475-yard 4th hole. 9 and 18 hole rates are available and tee times can be booked online or by phone, up to 14 days in advance. A stream and two ponds affect play on three holes, with the ponds affecting play dramatically on a Par 4. The ponds, which have been worked on (in 2000), are positioned around an enlarged green on the 250 yd 2nd hole, creating a somewhat island green.

The Loft at Sweet Water is located at 2556 Geryville Pike, Pennsburg, PA 18073.

The Loft: 215.679.8111. Golf: 215.541.3111. Visit www.golfsweetwater.com.



LOCAL DANCE SCHOOL STARTS NEW SEASON

The Pottstown Dance Theatre, under the direction of international dance artist Michelle Jones Wurtz, will start the 26-27 School Year with a bang! Ms. Wurtz, a full dance professor at Eastern University, recently returned from teaching and judging dance several works in Europe. She is bringing her vast knowledge of various dance styles back to the states for students to absorb.

Dr. David Heller, a champion break-dancer and Temple U dance professor, will be adding a new class teaching elements of Popping, Locking, Tutting, and Liquid. These are often thought of as sub genres of Hip Hop. He will also continue his break-dance lessons to students of all levels.

Other instructors include Marissa Anuzelli, Krysta Bernhardt, Janet LaCava, Molly McGinnis, Dr. Kelsey Nieckoski Noble, and Brianna Sanders. Apprentice teachers this upcoming year are Lucy Boone, Kate Garcia, Harper Heber, Teagan Lee, and Maddie Lobello. Classes are for age 3-100.

To register for classes, you can attend one of the school's open houses (8/29 from 12-7 and 9/2 from 5-8), call the school at 610.323.2569, or visit the school website at www.pottstowndance.com.



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THREE FIERCE AI TIPS TO FINISH THE YEAR STRONG THIS AUGUST



By Deborah Ann Spence, Fiercepreneur

August is that no-excuses month. It's not the beginning, and it's not the end — it's the stretch that tests how bad you really want it. This is when distractions get loud, routines get loose, and motivation starts to fade. But for the fierce entrepreneur, this is where focus turns into results.

Here's how to use AI to tighten your systems, sharpen your message, and walk into the final quarter with power, purpose, and peace.

Audit the Noise

If it's not moving you forward, it's weighing you down. Use AI to help you audit your time, your tasks, and your energy drains. Ask it to analyze your calendar, your emails, your project management data — and show you where the distractions live. Then cut them. You can't afford busy work when your legacy's on the line.

Fierce Truth: Distractions don't look like chaos — they look like comfort.

Automate the Consistency

August is about keeping promises — especially the ones you made to yourself

in January. Use AI to keep your business consistent when life gets unpredictable. Schedule your content, your email check-ins, your lead follow-ups — all on autopilot. Consistency creates momentum, and momentum creates money.

Fierce Truth: Discipline is hard. Automation makes it easier.

Reignite the Vision

When you forget why you started, everything feels heavier. Use AI as your reflection partner. Ask it to summarize your biggest wins, your testimonials, your growth since last year — and let it remind you of who you are and what you've built. Then use that clarity to set your Q4 goals — not based on pressure, but power.

Fierce Truth: You're not behind — you're being refined.

Final Thought

This August, it's time to get laser-focused. You've learned, built, and adjusted all year. Now it's time to execute. AI isn't your crutch — it's your amplifier. Let it handle the systems while you handle the mission.

Audit the noise. Automate the consistency. Reignite the vision. That's how you finish fierce.



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Deb Spence
deb@debspence.com
fiercepreneur.com/application

If this session doesn't free your time or sharpen your process, you still keep the plan and tools!

  	Denise L. Williams Founder of Be Resilient FORCE Chairperson Co-Founder: The VIBE Create Social Innovation Hub VIBE Cafe 249 E. High Street Pottstown PA 19464 www.berezilient.org 484-824-5727
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JOBS REPORT

KEYSTONE RESEARCH CENTER SAYS PENNSYLVANIA ADDS JOBS IN JUNE, BUT GROWTH REMAINS MODEST AND UNEQUAL

Following the release of the June 2026 national Employment Situation report, Keystone Research Center economist Maisum Murtaza issued the following statement:

"This morning, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry released its preliminary employment situation for June 2026. Pennsylvania continues to outperform the nation on key labor market indicators. Overall, Pennsylvania added 1,000 jobs from May to June 2026, fewer than the 9,000 added between April-May 2026. Pennsylvania added 34,500 jobs since June 2025.

"Pennsylvania's overall unemployment rate fell by 0.1 percent from the previous month to 4.1 percent, slightly below the national rate and 0.2 percent lower than PA's unemployment rate in June 2025. In contrast to national trends, the decline in PA unemployment was accompanied by increases in employment, the employment-to-population ratio, and the labor force participation rate. Pennsylvania employment reached a record high of 6,371,000, up 129,000 from June 2025. In previous months, national economic reporting noted that the slight decrease in the U.S. unemployment rate could be for the "wrong reasons" as the unemployment rate decrease was likely driven by increased numbers of discouraged work-

ers leaving the workforce entirely.

"While the overall report is stronger than anticipated, Black and Hispanic unemployment rates continue to be high at 6.9 percent and 8.2 percent, respectively. Both rates ticked down slightly over the last month, but they remain significantly higher than the low rates experienced during COVID recovery in 2023. Pennsylvania's Hispanic unemployment rate is up from a December 2023 low of 4.4 percent, and Black unemployment has increased significantly from a low of 3.8 percent July 2023.

"Pennsylvania's biggest job losses were in the professional & business service sector, down 4,700 jobs since May 2026, but up 5,400 since May 2025.

"Over the month of June, Pennsylvania's biggest job gains were seen in the leisure and hospitality sector. This industry gained 2,500 jobs, up 2.5% between May and June 2026, while leisure and hospitality jobs decreased nationally. Contrasting the national trend, this PA increase may in part reflect a temporary boost from World-Cup related tourism and spending, although jobs in this sector are still up 10,800 from June 2025. If this newest increase is largely event-driven, we may see this sector soften in the coming months."

The Keystone Research Center is a non-partisan economic think tank dedicated to conducting research and advancing policies that promote shared prosperity and economic opportunity for all Pennsylvanians.

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WHAT IS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION (AND WHY YOUR STICKY NOTES ARE COSTING YOU CLIENTS)



TECHNOLOGY By Marc Umstead, Plus One Technology

Digital transformation is one of those phrases that gets thrown around so much it has almost lost its meaning. Most small business owners hear it and picture expensive software projects, massive IT overhauls, and a team of consultants billing by the hour. The reality is far simpler, and far more powerful.

Digital transformation means getting the critical information that lives in people's heads, paper notebooks, sticky notes, and mental checklists into digital systems that your entire team can actually use. It is not about buying the flashiest technology. It is about making your business work the same way whether your best employee is in the office, out sick, or has moved on entirely.

The Sticky Note Problem Is Bigger Than You Think

Think about how much important information exists in your business right now that is not written down anywhere searchable. A client's preferences. A vendor's quirks. The steps your most experienced team member follows without even thinking about it. The reason a particular customer loves doing business with you.

Now ask yourself what happens when that person is unavailable.

Work grinds to a halt. Customers experience inconsistency. New employees make avoidable mistakes. And you, the business owner, spend your time playing human switchboard instead of growing your company.

This is the real cost of running your business on memory and paper. It is not just inefficiency. It is risk.

(Continued on page 18)



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TECHNOLOGY

(Continued from page 17)

Why Customer Context Is a Competitive Superpower

Here is a story that illustrates exactly why digital transformation matters for small businesses.

Imagine a remodeling company. During the very first sales meeting, the homeowner mentions offhand that she really wants a cozy reading nook for her kids in the new space. The salesperson thinks it is a great idea, jots it down on a notepad, and the project moves forward.

Months later, when the installation crew shows up, they have no idea that conversation ever happened. They do their job professionally and the work looks great. But they never mention the reading nook. They never acknowledge what the client shared. To that homeowner, it feels like no one was really listening.

Now imagine the opposite. That detail about the reading nook was captured in the CRM the same day the salesperson heard it. When the installation crew pulls up the job on their tablet that morning, they see a note that says, "Client mentioned on day one that she wanted a reading nook for her kids." One of them brings it up during the walk-through. The client

is stunned in the best possible way. She feels heard. She feels valued. She tells everyone she knows.

That is digital transformation in action. Not a robot. Not artificial intelligence. Just shared information that turns a good customer experience into an unforgettable one.

Digital Transformation Makes Your Whole Team Capable, Not Just Your Stars

One of the hardest truths in small business is that your best people carry far too much knowledge in their heads. When they are around, everything runs smoothly. When they are not, everyone else struggles.

Digital transformation changes that dynamic by creating a shared source of truth. Processes get documented. Customer history becomes visible. Decisions get logged. Suddenly your newer employees can deliver the same quality of service as your veterans because they have access to the same information.

This is also about accountability. When workflows live in a digital system, it is much easier to see where things are getting

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done, where they are falling through the cracks, and where your team needs support. You stop relying on gut feelings and start making decisions based on what is actually happening in your business.

If you are not sure where your business stands on this front, our Automation Scoreboard is a quick way to find out.

What Digital Transformation Actually Looks Like for a Small Business

You do not need to transform everything at once. For most small businesses in accounting, law, dental, or manufacturing, it starts with a few key moves:

1. **Move customer and client records into a CRM or practice management system** so any team member can see the full history of any relationship in seconds.

2. **Document your most important processes** in a shared platform like Microsoft SharePoint or a simple wiki so institutional knowledge is not locked inside one person's brain.

3. **Create a consistent intake process** so that information shared on day one of a client relationship does not disappear into a notepad never to be seen again.

4. **Use project management tools** so tasks, deadlines, and accountability are

visible to everyone instead of living in someone's email inbox.

5. **Connect your systems** where possible so information flows automatically instead of requiring someone to re-enter the same data in three different places.

6. **Create customer context documents** — this is a relatively new practice but it helps write all data for clients to an area and then pull relevant data for different departments.

None of these steps require a massive IT budget. They require intention, a clear starting point, and the right support to implement them in a way that your team will actually use.

What Happens If You Do Not Transform

The risk of staying in the sticky note era is not theoretical. It shows up in real ways.

Employees leave and take years of institutional knowledge with them. Customers feel like they have to start from scratch every time they interact with your business. Compliance becomes a nightmare because no one is quite sure where the important records live. Growth stalls because your business cannot scale beyond the capacity of a few key people who are already stretched thin.

(Continued on page 20)



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TECHNOLOGY

(Continued from page 19)

Frequently Asked Questions About Digital Transformation

Does digital transformation mean replacing all of my existing software?

Not necessarily. Digital transformation often means connecting and improving the systems you already have rather than starting over. The goal is accessible, organized, and shareable information, not necessarily brand-new tools.

How long does digital transformation take for a small business?

The first meaningful improvements can often be made within weeks, not months. A focused effort to document processes and move client information into a shared system can deliver visible results quickly, especially with the right guidance.

Is digital transformation only for large companies?

This is one of the biggest myths in small business. In fact, smaller teams often benefit more from digital transformation because the cost of one person being unavailable is proportionally much higher. A 10-person firm that loses its most knowledgeable employee feels it far more acutely than a 500-person corporation would.

Your Business Knowledge Is Too Valuable to Live on a Sticky Note

The version of your business you want, where customers feel genuinely remembered, where new employees can hit the ground running, where you are not the only one who knows how things work, is not some distant goal that requires a six-figure technology investment.

It starts with a decision to get information out of people's heads and into systems that work for everyone. That is what digital transformation really means for small businesses.

At Plus 1 Technology, we help accounting firms, law practices, dental offices, and small to medium businesses take those practical first steps without the overwhelm. We are not here to sell you technology for its own sake. We are here to help your business run the way it should.

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HEALTH INSURANCE By Bryan Nester, Nester Insurance, Inc.

Every year, employers across the country receive their health insurance renewal and ask the same question: "Why did our rates go up again?"

For many businesses, healthcare costs have increased year after year, often without a clear explanation or a meaningful strategy to control those costs. At the same time, the employee benefits industry has experienced an unprecedented wave of mergers and acquisitions. Large national firms have acquired hundreds of local insurance agencies, creating organizations with thousands of employees and books of business worth billions of dollars.

While size can bring resources, it doesn't always translate into better service or better solutions for small and mid-sized businesses.

Bigger Isn't Always Better

Many employers assume that working with one of the largest brokerage firms means they'll automatically receive the best pricing, the latest technology, and the strongest negotiating power. The reality is more nuanced.

Health insurance premiums are generally determined by the insurance carrier and the risk characteristics of your group, not by the size of your broker. A larger brokerage doesn't automatically unlock lower rates for an employer.

What often makes the biggest difference is the strategy behind the plan. Unfortunately, many growing broker-

ages are managing increasingly large client portfolios, which can leave mid-sized employers feeling like just another account number. Annual renewals become transactional instead of strategic, and conversations about long-term cost management may take a back seat to simply accepting the next renewal.

Is Your Renewal Just Another Price Increase?

If your annual renewal meeting consists of reviewing a spreadsheet, discussing the percentage increase, and selecting the "least expensive" option, you may be missing opportunities to better manage your healthcare costs.

Every renewal should include conversations about questions such as:

- Are there alternative funding strategies available?
- Could an HRA or HSA improve affordability?
- Is a level-funded or self-funded plan appropriate?
- Are there network alternatives worth considering?
- Would pharmacy benefit changes reduce costs?
- Are your employees enrolled in benefits they actually value?
- Can your payroll and benefits systems work together more efficiently?
- Is your broker proactively benchmarking your plan against the market?

These conversations often have a greater impact than simply comparing two insurance quotes.

(Continued on page 22)

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HEALTH INSURANCE

(Continued from page 21)

Service Still Matters

Healthcare benefits don't stop after open enrollment. Throughout the year, employers face:

- New hire enrollments
- Employee terminations
- COBRA administration
- Qualifying life events
- Payroll deduction changes
- Employee Navigator updates
- Carrier billing questions
- Claims and eligibility issues
- Compliance requirements

When these situations arise, responsiveness matters. Many employers tell us they're looking for more than an annual renewal meeting — they want a partner who is available year-round to help solve problems quickly and keep their benefits program running smoothly.

Mid-Sized Businesses Have Unique Needs

Companies with 25 to 250 employees often find themselves in a difficult position. They're too large for one-size-

fits-all solutions but may not receive the same level of strategic attention as a national employer with thousands of employees.

That doesn't mean they should settle for limited options. In many cases, these organizations can benefit from:

- Customized health plan designs
- Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRAs)
- Health Savings Account (HSA) strategies
- Level-funded or self-funded plan evaluations
- Executive benefit programs
- Voluntary benefits that improve employee satisfaction
- HR technology and payroll integration
- Ongoing compliance support

The right strategy depends on your workforce, budget, and business goals — not simply on the size of your broker.

Don't Confuse Size with Strategy

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It's the one who asks the right questions. A strategic advisor should help you:

- Understand why your renewal changed.
- Explore alternatives before accepting higher costs.
- Build a long-term benefits strategy.
- Improve the employee experience.
- Reduce administrative burdens.
- Identify opportunities to control health-care spending over time.

Before You Sign Your Renewal... Ask yourself:

- When was the last time my broker introduced a new cost-saving strategy?
- Have we explored alternatives beyond a traditional fully insured renewal?
- Do I hear from my broker only at renewal time?
- Does my broker understand our payroll, HR, and administrative challenges?
- Are we receiving proactive guidance or simply reacting to another premium increase?

If you answered "no" to several of these questions, it may be time to evaluate your options.

Changing brokers doesn't necessarily mean changing insurance carriers. In

many cases, employers can keep their existing carrier and plan while gaining a new advisor with a fresh perspective, stronger service, and a more proactive approach.

A Fresh Perspective Can Make a Difference

At Nester Insurance, we believe every employer deserves more than a renewal spreadsheet. We work with businesses to evaluate funding options, improve benefits administration, integrate payroll and HR systems, and develop long-term strategies that balance cost control with employee satisfaction.

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Use our scalable marketing approach to determine which of the above tactics will best meet your sales goals. Go to www.MalvernCommunications.com to see a selection of marketing projects that have a verified track record of outstanding performance for our clients.

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MAXIMIZING YOUR MARKETING ROI IN THE SUMMER RUSH



MARKETING TIPS
By Brandon Rost,
CEO, beMarketing

The Illusion of the Full Schedule

Summer has officially arrived, and with it comes the relentless wave of service calls. When trucks are constantly dispatched and phones never stop ringing, it is dangerously easy to assume your marketing strategy is flawless. However, mere busyness is not a metric of success; a full schedule does not automatically equate to a highly profitable one.

The Power of High-Intent Search

For the last few months, broad awareness campaigns might have served you well, but peak season demands precision. When a homeowner faces an emergency, they bypass casual social media browsing and go directly to search engines. Shifting your advertising dollars toward high-intent, immediate-need keywords ensures your business intercepts the most profitable, urgent jobs precisely when customers are in distress.



Automated Responsiveness is a Feature

Generating premium leads means nothing if your internal pipeline is leaking. In the home services sector, a missed call is an immediate lost job, as frantic customers will simply dial the next competitor. Implementing instant automated text replies and quote confirmations serves as essential operational armor, securing high-value jobs even while your dispatchers are tied up.

Double Down on Strategic Value

When demand hits its seasonal peak, the urge to undercut local competitors with massive discounts can be strong, but you must resist it. Instead of slashing prices just to generate noise, pivot toward strategic value-adds. Bundling maintenance plans or offering complementary inspections protects your margins while laying the groundwork for recurring fall revenue.

The Bottom Line

The summer rush is a chaotic and thrilling opportunity, but you cannot maximize your returns without harvesting immediate reviews and rigorously tracking your data. The businesses that dominate their local markets are the ones that let analytics guide their spending and actively transform seasonal volume into a permanent, five-star online reputation.

At beMarketing, we help home service businesses navigate the chaos of their busiest seasons and build data-driven strategies that turn high demand into sustainable, long-term profit.



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SIX TIPS FOR CONSISTENT SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING IN 2026



SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

By Theresa Mintzer

Staying connected with your customers is more important than ever, and social media remains one of the easiest and most affordable ways to do it. Consistent posting keeps your business visible, builds trust, and reminds customers why they should choose you. The good news? You don't have to post every day. You just need a consistent plan.

Here are six simple ways to stay on track:

1. **Plan ahead.** Set aside time each month to map out promotions, seasonal updates, and behind-the-scenes content.
2. **Batch your content.** Use ChatGPT to brainstorm ideas and Canva to create branded graphics.
3. **Schedule posts.** Tools like Meta Business Suite let you schedule content in advance, saving time.
4. **Show the people behind your business.** Photos of your team, your process, or a day on the job help customers connect with your brand.



5. **Engage quickly.** Respond promptly to comments, messages, and reviews to build trust and loyalty.

6. **Reuse your best content.** If a post performed well a few months ago, update it and share it again. New followers likely haven't seen it.

Need help creating a social media strategy that works for your business? I offer Social Media Coaching to help you stay consistent and stress-free. Visit MintzerSolutions.com to learn more and book a session.

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Ondra-Huyett Associates, Inc. (OHA) was formed in 1995 with the belief in a better way to deliver construction by collaborating with owners, designers, and trade contractors to achieve the project objectives for cost, schedule, and quality while reducing risk to all parties involved in achieving them.

We continually look for better ways to deliver buildings and to do so at a higher level of integrity and professionalism. Our approach has worked well beyond our expectations. We earn business with it, we attract experienced talent because of it, and we depend on it every day to assure construction quality and value. OHA is recognized as major provider of construction services in Eastern Pennsylvania

serving top-tier corporate clients by working with local and national A&E firms and countless trade contractors to deliver award winning construction projects.

Most recently the American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC) recognized the design and construction of one of our projects which exemplifies this process, in their 2026 IDEAS Excellence in Adaptive Re-use Award.



Hawk Pointe Medical Office Building – Washington, NJ



Bear Creek Resort & Conference Center – Macungie, PA



Blessed Trinity Church – Bethlehem, PA

DIVERSE CLIENT BASE

Ondra-Huyett serves clients from commercial, industrial, higher education, manufacturing, institutional and health-care industries, building everything from Class-A office space to hotels, resorts, and mission critical facilities.

Through its collaborative approach the company has built many long-term relationships with regional clients, including C.F. Martin & Co., Lutron, PPL Corp., Lehigh Valley Sporting Clays, Bear Creek Mountain Resort, Cardinal Glass, and TierPoint.

INTEGRITY LEADS TO LONGEVITY

For Ondra-Huyett, one of the best measures of success is repeat business. If you treat people fairly, are transparent with costs, approach challenges in a collaborative manner, deliver a quality product, add value, and honor your commitments; clients and contractors will respond favorably. It provides the basis for sustaining relationships of trust, respect, fairness, and integrity and is the backbone of our Mission Statement.

FULL-SERVICE CONTRACTOR

As Ondra-Huyett's "Managers & Builders" tag line references, Ondra-Huyett manages projects from conception through turnover. Our team delivers projects which look and function as intended, while meeting today's sustainable objectives. When clients see the OHA logo on a white hardhat, they know they can count on the consistent service and reliability they require.

GRATIFICATION

Construction is not an easy business, even though the simplest of projects may have been built before, each new project has variables unlike any other, ranging



New Tripoli Bank – Macungie, PA

from the time of year to different trade contractors to weather to designers to owners. Regardless of the circumstances, Ondra-Huyett approaches each project with the tools and a track record for success.

For Ondra-Huyett our corporate goals of on time, on budget, everyone home every night, and having a client that is willing to recommend; may seem simple, but for many of our competitors they are difficult to deliver. At Ondra-Huyett it's our passion and expertise.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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Aug. 12 from 7:30 a.m.-9 a.m.
Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
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Register at Greaterreading.org/cards

Lost in Translation? Navigating Workplace Interpretation and Liability

Aug. 13 from Noon-1:30 p.m.
Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$25/person- GRCA Members;
\$50/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/translation

Leading Through Change: Turning Resistance into Commitment*

Aug. 18 from 9 a.m.-Noon
Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
\$195/person- GRCA Members;
\$275/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/commitment

The Picnic & Games

Aug. 19 (Rain date: Aug. 20)
from 4:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.
FirstEnergy Stadium
1900 Centre Ave., Reading
\$70/person- GRCA Members;
\$80/person- Future GRCA Members
Register at Greaterreading.org/picnic

Lean In Circle Information Session

Aug. 25 from 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m.
Center for Business Excellence
49 Commerce Dr., Wyomissing
Free
Register at Greaterreading.org/leanin

Power Networking: Mimmo's Italian Restaurant & Pizzeria

Aug. 27 from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Mimmo's Italian Restaurant & Pizzeria
290 Morgantown Road, Reading
\$35/person- GRCA Member exclusive
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REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP



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ADVOCACY: At the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, we champion the interest of businesses big and small. We work with lawmakers at every level to create a thriving environment where companies can grow and succeed.

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

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

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

TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Announces 2026-2027 Board of Directors and Welcomes two New Members to the Board

The TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce (TCACC) is pleased to announce its 2026-2027 Board of Directors and Executive Committee while welcoming two new members to its Board: **Lana Potgieter**, President of Lighthouse Leadership Coaching & Development LLC and **Jacob Greth**, Manufacturing Manager at Sealstrip Corporation.

The Chamber's volunteer Board of Directors is comprised of business and community leaders from across southeastern Berks, western Montgomery, and northern Chester counties who provide strategic leadership and guidance to advance the Chamber's mission of fostering economic growth, strengthening businesses, and enhancing the communities it serves.

Lana Potgieter is the founder and President of Lighthouse Leadership Coaching & Development LLC, a strategic leadership consultancy based in Pottstown. Originally from Cape Town, South Africa, Lana brings more than 20 years of international leadership and organizational development experience, having worked with businesses across South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. A graduate of Leadership TriCounty, she is passionate about developing leaders, strengthening organizations, and helping businesses achieve sustainable success through strong relationships and strategic leadership.

"I feel truly honored to join the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors," said Potgieter. "Since



Lana Potgieter



Jacob Greth

making Pottstown my home, I have experienced firsthand the strength, generosity, and entrepreneurial spirit of its business community. I look forward to contributing my perspective and experience while working alongside fellow Board members to create meaningful connections, strengthen local leadership, and ensure the Chamber continues to be a relevant and valuable voice for businesses across the TriCounty area."

Jacob Greth serves as Manufacturing Manager at Sealstrip Corporation, where he has been a leader in manufacturing operations for nearly two decades. An accomplished operations management professional, Jacob has extensive experience implementing business strategies that improve production quality, operational efficiency, and organizational performance. His expertise includes Lean Leadership, Six Sigma methodologies, regulatory compliance, and continuous process improvement, making him a valuable addition to the Chamber's leadership.

The Chamber also recognizes its returning Board members whose continued service and leadership strengthen the organization's impact across the region.

2026-2027 Executive Committee

- **Bill Vitiello**, Chair – Vice President/Director of Strategic Relationships, Ambler Savings Bank
- **April Barkasi**, Past Chair – President & CEO, CEDARVILLE Engineering Group, LLC
- **Wendy Moyer-Drabick**, Chair Elect – Owner, Moyer-Drabick & Associates, Ltd.
- **Stephanie Ziegler**, Treasurer – Business Relationship Officer, Diamond Credit Union
- **Joseph K. Koury, Esq.**, Solicitor – Associate, O'Donnell, Weiss & Mattei, P.C.
- **Harrison Santangelo**, Secretary – President, TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce

2026-2027 Board of Directors

- **Tyler Arkatin**, Constellation
- **Amy Auwaerter**, Montgomery County Community College
- **Bill Breslawski**, Maillie LLP
- **Clark Dhein**, MacKissic, Inc.
- **Jacob Greth**, Sealstrip Corporation
- **Megan La Rosa**, Tompkins
- **S. Joseph McDevitt II**, Translogistics, Inc.
- **David Morrison**, TriCounty Health Plans
- **Lana Potgieter**, Lighthouse Leadership Coaching & Development LLC

Together, the Executive Committee and Board of Directors represent a broad cross-section of industries and expertise that will help guide the Chamber as it continues to connect businesses, cultivate leaders, advocate for regional prosperity, and strengthen the TriCounty business community.

About the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce: The TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce (TCACC) is a membership-based organization serving businesses throughout southeastern Berks, western Montgomery, and northern Chester counties. Dedicated to fostering economic growth, leadership, and community development, TCACC provides resources, advocacy, and connections that help businesses thrive while strengthening the region's economic vitality.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

Levan Machine & Truck Equipment
(610) 944-7455

<http://www.levanmachine.com/>
Manufacturers and Processors

MainLine Lift & Home
(917) 612-9573

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/mainline-lift-home/?viewAsMember=true>
General Contractors

One Source Refreshment Service, Inc.
(610) 495-9353

<http://www.onesourcerefreshment.com/>
Vending Machines / Food Services, Beverage Distributors, Food Distributors, Nutritional Products / Services, Water Suppliers

Pottstown Construction Company
(484) 345-1399

<https://pottstownconstruction.com/>
Remodeling / Renovations / Repairs

MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

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

48+ Years
Specht Realty, Inc.

38 years
Hickory Valley Golf Club
Colorworks
YWCA Tri-County Area

20 years
TriCounty Community Network, Inc.

7 years
Tornetta's Italian Restaurant
Red Horse Motoring Club
Ehst Custom Kitchens, Inc.
Flagship Financial



REGIONAL CHAMBER ROUNDUP

You're Invited to the TriCounty Area Chamber's 2026 Golf Outing!

Come support your Chamber and make lasting connections over a round of golf!



Friday, August 21st
At Twin Ponds Golf Course

8 AM Registration

9 AM Shotgun Start

1:30 PM Chamber BBQ Lunch by Moyer's Catering

(Lunch only option available for non-golfers)

Single Golfer- \$150
Foursome - \$550
Networking BBQ Lunch Only \$40



Scan the QR Code to register for the golf outing, lunch, or a sponsorship opportunity.

Scan the QR Code to register for the REACH Conference or a sponsorship opportunity.



Join us for the 6th Annual REACH Conference on September 2nd from 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM!

An unforgettable half-day experience designed to inspire, connect, and empower women across our region.



Keynote Speaker: Erika Rothenberger

A nationally recognized keynote speaker, bestselling author, and thought leader on audacity, resilience, and bold leadership. Known for her powerful storytelling and actionable insights, Erika inspires audiences to expand beyond limitations and step into courageous leadership.



Panel Discussion: Real Conversations. Real Impact.

We are proud to present a dynamic panel featuring:

- Karen Nerheim, CEO, Americas Crane & Equipment Corp
- Heather Chaudler, President of Sealstrip Corporation
- Kristi Gage-Lisderman, CEO of Gage Talent & Business Solutions
- Margo McDannell, President at 1031 Corp.



Roundtable Discussions:

The day will also feature interactive roundtable discussions led by Michelle Gavan, a dynamic speaker, certified life coach, and co-founder of The Gavan Group, LLC. Michelle is known for her ability to inspire transformation through both corporate and personal development work.



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PHOENIXVILLE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

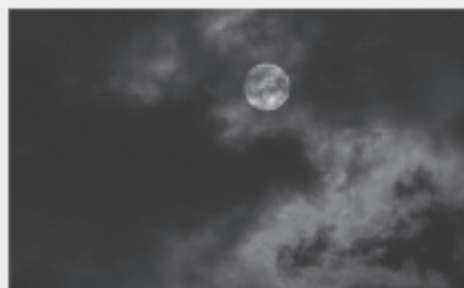


710 Main St., Phoenixville, PA 19460
• 610.933.3070

• 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."



HAUNTED HISTORY WITH RYAN CONROY

Join local historian Ryan Conroy for Haunted History, a walking tour series that pulls back the curtain on the stories and spirits that shaped our community. From forgotten tragedies and unsolved mysteries to the restless legends that still echo through our streets, Ryan brings the past to life with the death of a history scholar and the storytelling of a born guide.



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 voice and advocate for the local business community—connecting members with professionals, mentors, and customers while helping businesses grow and strengthening our region. We serve businesses in Collegeville, Trappe, Schwenksville, Upper Providence, Lower Providence, Lower Frederick, Perkiomen, Skippack, and Oaks. Visit www.PVchamber.net to view membership directory. To sign-up

for E-news, email info@PVchamber.net and follow us on Facebook @PerkValleyChamber.net

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Annual Summer Mixer – Late August

Join the Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce for our **Annual Summer Networking Mixer** in late August. This signature event brings together business professionals from across the region for an evening of great food, refreshments, and meaningful networking in a relaxed outdoor setting. It's the perfect opportunity to make new connections, strengthen existing relationships, and celebrate the vibrant local business community. Watch for the official date, location, and registration details at www.PVChamber.net and in the Chamber's weekly eNews.

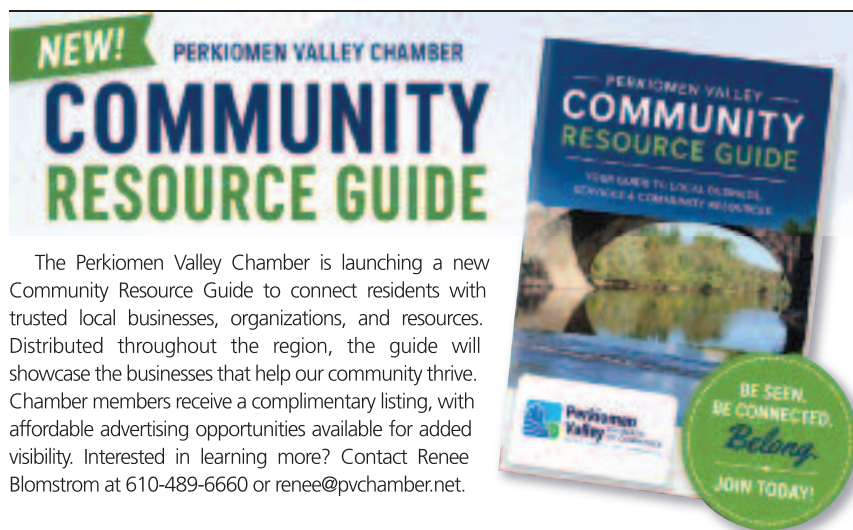
Semi-Annual Cornhole Tournament – Late September

Join the Perkiomen Valley Chamber for our **Semi-Annual Cornhole Tournament** at **The Flying Pig Tavern & Tap** in Limerick! Whether you're a seasoned player or just in it for the fun, this networking event is for everyone. **Partners are randomly drawn**, making it a great way to meet new people and build business connections. **Player registrations, networking-only tickets, and sponsorship opportunities** are available. Both player and networking tickets include food and a drink ticket.



PV Perks Cards – Shop Local & Save!

For just \$10, enjoy exclusive multi-use offers from your favorite **local restaurants, retailers, and service businesses**. Purchase online, then pick up your card at the PV Chamber office or request it to be mailed directly to you. Visit www.PVChamber.net to purchase and view the full list of participating businesses and offers.



The Perkiomen Valley Chamber is launching a new Community Resource Guide to connect residents with trusted local businesses, organizations, and resources. Distributed throughout the region, the guide will showcase the businesses that help our community thrive. Chamber members receive a complimentary listing, with affordable advertising opportunities available for added visibility. Interested in learning more? Contact Renee Blomstrom at 610-489-6660 or renee@pvchamber.net.

Visit www.PVChamber.net for Fall Workshops, Lunch & Learn and Mixer details.

* **Editor's Note:** At the time of publication, several event dates and details were still being finalized. Please visit PVChamber.net or subscribe to our weekly eNews for the latest event information and registration details.



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!

Spark SESSIONS

IDEAS CONNECTIONS GROWTH

Introducing SPARK Sessions – A New Monthly Business Roundtable

We're excited to announce the return of one of our most popular Chamber programs—with a fresh new name and a renewed purpose!

Introducing SPARK Sessions – a monthly gathering designed specifically for business owners, entrepreneurs, and professionals who want to connect, collaborate, and grow together.

Formerly known as **Shark Think Tank**, SPARK Sessions offers a welcoming, supportive environment where members can:

- Share ideas and challenges
- Brainstorm solutions with fellow business owners
- Exchange resources and best practices
- Gain fresh perspectives
- Build meaningful business relationships

Whether you're launching a new idea, looking for feedback, facing a business challenge, or simply want to connect with other local professionals, SPARK Sessions is the place to be.

We will have our 1st Meeting on August 20, 2026, 11:30 am at **Creekside Sports Bar & Grille**, where conversation, collaboration, and community come together.

Registration \$30.00 Spring-Ford Chamber Members - \$40.00 Non-Chamber Members
AUGUST ONLY - \$ 30.00 for everyone

Bring your questions, your ideas, and your experience—and leave inspired with new connections and actionable ideas.

We hope you'll join us as we ignite new opportunities for your business and our Chamber community.

We look forward to seeing you at our first SPARK Session!

BRING YOUR CHALLENGES. SHARE YOUR IDEAS. LEAVE WITH SOLUTIONS.

BUSINESS CONNECT

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

The Spring-Ford Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to continue our thriving- Spring-Ford Chamber Business Connect! **This event is held every Tuesday at the Sunshine Café.** Interested in speaking? Reach out to us at sfchamberofcommerce@gmail.com

Event Logistics:

8:00-8:30am-
Networking

8:30-8:45am-
Introductions

8:45-9:00am-
Presentation

9:00-9:15am-
Wrap up

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

WOMEN in NETWORKING

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Hosted by:
MICHELLE GOVAN

Join us for inspiring conversations, valuable connections, and real support from women who get it.

1ST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH

2026 DATES

- ✓ August 7, 2026
- ✓ September 11, 2026
- ✓ October 2, 2026
- ✓ November 6, 2026
- ✓ December 4, 2026

TIME
8:00 AM

LOCATION
Limerick Township Building
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LET'S MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR KIDS



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

Do you remember when Peter, Paul and Mary sang "Where have all the flowers gone?" That was way back in the 60's and our country was experiencing a new generation of young people protesting, expressing their feelings, speaking out against the establishment. Microwave ovens, VCR's, video games, desk top computers, FAX machines and car phones were only "toys of the future". Children's daycare was almost unheard of while mothers stayed home to provide for their children. Children played in their yards, built tree forts, entertained themselves with pick-up games and "kick the can". They constructed sand castles, fixed their own broken bikes, built skate boards out of 2 X 4's and an old pair of roller skates, created their own games and activities out of whatever they could find at the time. Older children kept themselves busy in sports, school activities, paper routes, odd jobs in the neighborhood or by working at local business establishments that would hire kids.

All this, plus much more, helped create a generation of young adults that grew into the 70's and 80's as critical thinkers that earned more wealth, had more material possessions, leisure time and a taste for the good life than any generation before them.

The unfortunate outcome of this evolution is that children of today are being brought up in a world of convenience. They need not and want a lot: designer clothes, expensive toys, fast food and less responsibility. This coupled with more free time with less physical activity has

created a "new generation" of children with limited imagination, stifled creativity, low motivation and depressed zest or enthusiasm for life.

How is this possible? I think it's very simple to understand. Necessity has always been labeled as the mother of invention. Since the birth of our country, the need to serve and to provide the basic essentials to maintain a safe and healthy family has driven men far beyond their own expectations and limits. Today however, too many young people have no concept of what their fore fathers endured and sacrificed to provide for their families with a life of leisure and luxury they experience today. Therefore, when there is no need or necessity, when everything is given to children so they want for nothing but more, it seems understandable why today's youth are becoming couch potatoes that lack incentive, imagination, creativity and how to think through a problem—critical thinking.

So, what can we do about all of this? First of all, let's stop doing everything for and giving everything to our children. Let's provide more opportunities for our kids to be creative, to take a few chances, to fail every once in a while, to use their imaginations that lead them to new and challenging experiences. Get them away from their computers, video games and cell phones. Get them outside and active.

I believe we need to challenge our children's choices to help them make better decisions. Get them involved in sports and group activities where they learn teamwork, problem solving, and learning through doing. Allow them to make some mistakes that they will learn from. Allow them to build their character and self-worth and develop new skills that will guide them into their adult lives. Encourage them to build relationships with other boys and girls that will develop friendships that support and protect one another. Give your children responsibilities and hold them accountable. Teach them about respect and why it is important and how to treat others. Last but not least, encourage your children to look people in the eyes when they are talking to them. Effective communication depends on engaging with the other person.

Before closing I want you to know that I strongly believe in the youth of today. With that said,

I want to suggest that the world, in general, is allowing cultural changes that can influence our younger generation in a not so positive direction. We need to provide good examples of work ethics, moral and ethical standards, love and respect of others and how to preserve our American culture of liberty and justice for all. We live in the greatest country in the world and we are responsible for helping our children maintain that position. God Bless America for another 250 years.





Rochelle Owens, Exp Realty, LLC

Rochelle Owens is a Realtor, author, and speaker who specializes in helping seniors navigate a stress-free home sale and a smooth transition to senior living. With decades of real estate experience and a compassionate, patient approach, she guides clients and their families through every step of the downsizing and moving process. Rochelle is also the author of *Successful Moves: The Ultimate Guide to a Stress-Free Home Sale and a Smooth Move to Senior Living*.



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Why It's Important to Partner with a Local Bank for Merchant Services



By Carolann Westendorp, Business Solutions Officer, JBT

Merchant Services, which enable businesses to provide online and in-person electronic payment options, have become increasingly important for small businesses to succeed in today's marketplace.

One of the primary reasons comes down to customer expectations. Regardless of where they are shopping, customers want fast, flexible payment options and businesses that don't accept cards or digital payments risk losing business and sales to competitors that do. Customers view having those payment options available as an extension of a business' customer service experience.

Providing these convenient payment options merchant also helps lead to higher sales because debit and credit card users generally spend more than customers who pay with cash.

In addition, merchant services improves security for small businesses since digital payments lower the risk of theft, counterfeit bills, and cash handling errors. And with reporting tools and analytics available, small businesses can track sales, manage inventory more efficiently, and better understand customer behavior.

While there are many benefits to incorporating merchant services into your business, there's also the reality that who you choose to supply those services is often the biggest factor in determining how well it works for you. That's why

partnering with a local bank, like JBT, is so important.

To start with, getting merchant services through a local bank results in more streamlined cash flow and faster funding. You can easily and effortlessly manage credit card processing, operating, and payroll accounts in one place – an integrated approach that gets funds to your business account faster, which in turn improves your cash flow.

Equally important, by partnering with a local bank, your business gets the benefit of having a dedicated, local contact.

Often with larger processors you are forced to interact with automated call centers or representatives who are from outside the area. Or worse, some processors promise the world but after they get your business you never hear from them again. By contrast, with a local bank like JBT, you get the peace-of-mind of working with someone who truly understands the uniqueness of your market and region.

If issues arise, you can reach out directly to your local bank contact and they can work to get the issue resolved quickly, whether it's related to deposits, chargebacks, etc. This personalized support is normal in a local bank where the people live and work in the same place your business operates. The same is not true for a majority of larger national providers.

Merchant services are increasingly important for small businesses to stay competitive and choosing the right partner is equally vital. If you looking into merchant services for your business, or if you're not satisfied with your current provider, I encourage you to reach out to JBT.

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SBRA EVENTS

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

- **Breakfast Referral Club – August 7th @ B2 Bistro 7:30-9:00am**
- **Networking Mingle – August 26th @ the Goggle Works 5:30-7:00pm**

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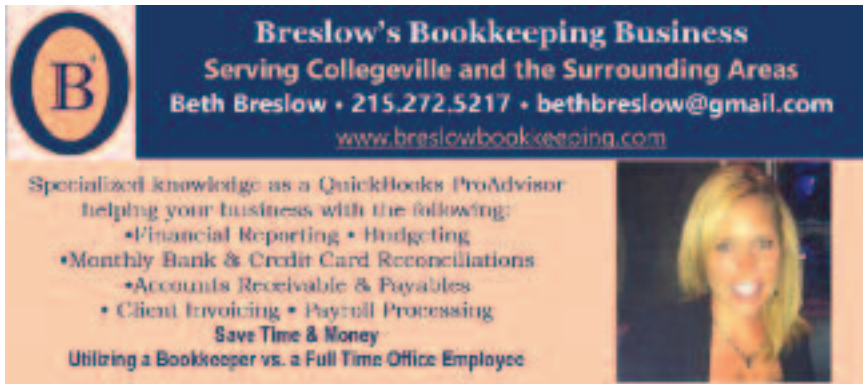
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WHY YOUR BUSINESS MAY NEED A LEGAL "CHECKUP"



LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

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

Over the next few weeks, Wolf, Baldwin

will be announcing an annual "Business Checkup" program – a reduced-fee program available only to members of the Tri County Area Chamber of Commerce. The goal of the program is to make sure businesses are keeping up with the legal requirements and best legal practices relevant to their particular businesses. Details about the program will go out to members soon. But even for non-members, a legal checkup is an important maintenance tool for any business.

In considering the idea of a legal checkup, your first question may be: why is this necessary? The answers will vary from business to business. But the common thread is that no matter the type of business, when business owners come to us with acute legal needs – perhaps a lawsuit or a customer who refuses to pay an invoice or issues with a problem employee – we often find underlying problems with the client's documentation or protocols. In many cases, the new acute problems could have been avoided if the proper documentation or protocols had been in effect in the first place.

Here are a few examples.

Although Pennsylvania's Home Improvement Consumer Protection Law ("HICPL") has been in effect nearly 12 years now, and although most home improvement contractors are aware of the requirement that they include their contractor identification numbers on their consumer contracts, it is shocking to see how many of these contracts fail to comply with other critical requirements of the HICPL – including both required contract terms and prohibited contract terms. These are no small details. In most cases, a contractor whose contracts do not comply with the HICPL cannot sue to enforce the contract itself. Instead, that contractor will only be permitted to sue for the reasonable value of its services, which presents proof problems that would likely not arise if the contractor had been legally permitted to sue on the contract itself.

Many contracts for the sale of other products and services, or the master service agreements that are in effect for the specific statements of work that follow for the sale of products or services, are missing key terms that could make it less likely for the contractor to have to sue to get paid in the first place. Specifically, interest clauses and fee-shifting clauses requiring the buyer to pay the seller's legal fees if suit is filed for collection can radically alter the settlement leverage in a case, making it far more likely that the buyer will pay up before suit is necessary.

(Continued on page 40)

Annual Business Check Up

Special Rate for
TriCounty Area Chamber Members

\$250 includes choice of (2)
of the following services:

Review of:

- Business Contracts
 - Employment or Independent Contractor Agreements
 - Non-Competes and Severance Agreements
 - Confidentiality Agreements and NDAs
 - Shareholders' Agreement, Operating Agreement, or Bylaws
 - Company Record Books for Compliance with Required Formalities
 - Employee Handbooks for Legal Compliance and Best Practices
 - Promissory Notes, Guarantees, and Mortgages
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LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

(Continued from page 39)

In the context of residential leases, many lease agreements are still written on forms that were in widespread use, available from the purveyors of physical legal forms, back in the 1960s and 1970s, long before the internet, also before courts started holding landlords responsible for the ambiguities arising from the use of archaic language in their leases and, most importantly, before the enactment of Pennsylvania's *Plain Language Consumer Contract Act*. Under that Act, a consumer contract or lease that does not satisfy the Act's "test of readability" can result in the contractor or landlord being subjected to civil penalties and claims for the consumer's attorney fees.

If you have employees, you will inevitably have employment disputes. Many of these disputes arise (or fester) because of weak or unclear employment policies or a failure to adequately document earlier infractions by the same employee. And many such disputes can be nipped in the bud with (1) employment manuals that clearly set forth employer expectations of their workers, and (2) a system of written warnings for early infractions.

Still on the issue of employment manuals, many older manuals need to be dusted off and updated to address issues that first arose or attained heightened significance over the past 10 to 20 years. These issues include sexual harassment policies, rules governing workplace romances, social media usage, bring your own device policies, computer monitoring, and the Pennsylvania Medical Marijuana Law.

One problem we often encounter with the corporations we represent is that some have gone years without complying with required corporate formalities. In some cases, they cannot find their minute books,

their share certificates or, sometimes most importantly, their share transfer ledgers. Without such documentation, particularly for closely-held family businesses that have been around for decades, it can be difficult to determine who actually owns what stock. Further, without such documentation or annual meeting minutes, a corporation places itself at risk of having its corporate veil pierced, such that a creditor might be able to impose personal liability on shareholders for acts of their corporation.

One of the biggest and most confusing issues for many established corporations and limited liability companies is business succession planning. This topic becomes an urgent concern for business owners who are looking to retire in the next few years, while also wondering who will own and run their businesses, and how, when retirement has run its course. Should they transfer ownership now or slowly over time or only upon death? Should they put in place a plan for the transfer of control now or at some specified time in the future? These questions can require much discussion, and may result in a plan that transfers business control independently of the transfer of business ownership.

These are but a few of the issues that can and should be addressed by the owners of small businesses. A business checkup can help resolve many of these issues, and provide business owners with piece of mind as they take their businesses forward into the future.

Bruce L. Baldwin, Esquire is a partner in the law firm of Wolf, Baldwin and Associates, P.C., with offices in Pottstown, Pennsburg, West Chester, and Reading, and has represented employers and employees in business matters and litigation for over 40 years. He may be reached by calling 610.323.7436, or by e-mail at BBaldwin@wolfbaldwin.com.

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WOLF, BALDWIN & ASSOCIATES, P.C. ANNOUNCES THE RETIREMENT OF CHARLES D. GARNER, JR, ESQ.

Wolf, Baldwin & Associates, P.C. announced the retirement of Attorney Charles D. Garner, Jr. as of July 1, 2026.

"We were extremely honored in 2012 when Mr. Garner left his previous firm and asked to join us here at Wolf, Baldwin & Associates," said Levi Wolf, managing partner of Wolf, Baldwin & Associates. "It meant a lot to us that an attorney so well-respected in the community would seek to associate himself with our firm. It has been a professional pleasure to work alongside him for over a decade, and we will miss his legal acumen and thoughtful advice. The whole Pottstown community benefitted from his guidance to the Borough of Pottstown and I am sure that all of the elected officials and staff who worked with him will miss him dearly. We wish Chuck the best of luck in his well-deserved retirement."

Mr. Garner received his juris doctor from Dickinson School of Law in 1986. He practiced with the firm of Reynier, Crocker, Allebach & Reber from 1986 through 1998, after which he started his own law firm, Garner and Bauer. He joined Wolf, Baldwin & Associates in 2012.

Mr. Garner served as Solicitor for the Upper Perk Police Commission, Pennsburg Borough, Upper Pottsgrove Township, Limerick Township Zoning Hearing Board, Lower Pottsgrove Township, Phoenixville Borough, and the Douglass Township Planning Agency. His longest municipal appointment was with the Borough of Pottstown, where he served as Solicitor for the Borough and the Planning Commission from 1996 to December 2025.



A donation to the Richard J. Ricketts Community Center in Pottstown has been made in honor of Attorney Garner. The Ricketts Center provides activities and programming to the local Pottstown community, and is a program of the Boyertown Area Multi-Service. Donations can be made in Mr. Garner's honor at: <https://www.boyertownareamulti-service.org/the-ricketts-center/>

ABOUT WOLF, BALDWIN & ASSOCIATES, P.C.: Wolf, Baldwin & Associates, P.C., is a general practice law firm Pottstown, established in 1973 by founding partner Jack F. Wolf. Bruce L. Baldwin joined the firm in 1987, and Levi S. Wolf joined the firm in 1996. The firm has additional offices in Reading, West Chester, and Pennsburg. Practice areas include Workers' Compensation matters, Business and Corporate Law, Estate Planning, Estate Administration and Probate, Real Estate, and General Civil Litigation.

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Every day, our team prepares artisan breads, croissants, pastries, cookies, desserts, and café favorites using quality ingredients and traditional baking methods. From rustic loaves and buttery pastries to homemade pies and specialty tortes, we take pride in offering products that are made fresh and crafted with care. Our commitment to quality extends beyond our baked goods. We strive to provide friendly service and an experience that keeps customers coming back.

As the new owner of St. Peter's Bakery, I am honored to continue a tradition that has been an important part of the community for many years. My goal is to preserve the bakery's character and reputation while introducing new ideas and offerings that reflect the needs and interests of our

customers. Whether it's expanding our menu, featuring seasonal specialties, or creating events that bring people together, we are always looking for ways to enhance the bakery experience.

Small businesses thrive because of the communities that support them, and we are incredibly grateful for the encouragement and loyalty we receive every day. Whether you have been visiting the bakery for years or are discovering it for the first time, we invite you to stop in, enjoy a fresh-baked treat, and become part of the St. Peter's Bakery family.

We look forward to serving the community for many years to come and continuing to make St. Peter's Bakery a place where great food, warm hospitality, and lasting connections come together.



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Introducing Matthew Alan's Tasty Treats!

Matthew Alan's Tasty Treats™ is a fully independent bakery located at 600 Heritage Dr. #102 in Pottstown, serving Pottstown, Sanatoga, and the surrounding Tri-County area. Our story began in November 2021, when we first opened as a licensed affiliate of a well-known sticky bun brand. From day one, we focused on high-quality ingredients, a professionally trained barista crew, a custom-designed coffee blend, and a strong commitment to baking excellence.

Over time, our menu expanded well beyond its original offerings, with many customer favorites developed in our own Pottstown kitchen. Today, our menu highlights include specialty bun toppings, classic eclairs, fruit tarts, cakes, our signature breakfast sandwiches, and a growing selection of gluten-free treats. That continued growth led to the official launch of Matthew Alan's Tasty Treats™ on May 9, 2026, featuring an expanded menu of independently developed baked goods, including our all-new sticky bun and cinnamon bun recipes, which are already receiving positive reviews from customers as being better than ever.

Today, we are pleased to introduce ourselves to fellow local businesses, organizations, schools, offices, and community groups. In addition to our daily bakery offerings, we provide catering trays and big box coffee suitable for meetings, parties, conferences, staff appreciation events, and special gatherings. We also support



culinary training and internship opportunities for students from local vocational and community college programs. As we continue to grow, we look forward to building relationships throughout the local business community and sharing with the people and organizations that make this area special.

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At Fire Birdz Hot Chicken, our mission is to serve up the most flavorful and fiery hot chicken in PA, blending Southern tradition with a modern twist. We're here to ignite your taste buds with every bite, offering a welcoming space where friends and family can gather to enjoy bold flavors, top-quality ingredients, and exceptional service.

We envision Fire Birdz Hot Chicken as the go-to destination for hot chicken lovers in Pottstown — a place where the heat meets the flavor, and every meal is an unforgettable experience. We strive to

build a community around our passion for great food, fostering connections and spreading joy through our signature dishes, while setting the standard for hot chicken restaurant dining across the region.

Fire Birdz Hot Chicken is located at 149 E. High Street, Pottstown, PA 19464. We are open weekdays from 10:00 AM to 12:00 AM; weekends 10:00 AM to 2:00 AM. For additional information, please call 484.300.4524. Check out our full menu at www.firebirdzhotchicken.com.

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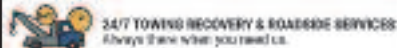


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NEW KEYSTONE RESEARCH CENTER ANALYSIS SHOWS PENNSYLVANIA'S WAREHOUSE ROOFTOPS COULD POWER MORE THAN 924,000 HOMES BY GOING SOLAR

Research quantifies massive solar potential across every county and legislative district as lawmakers weigh relevant legislation

A new analysis released last month by the Keystone Research Center (KRC) finds that Pennsylvania's warehouse rooftops represent an enormous, untapped resource for clean energy, capable of generating enough electricity to power more than **924,000** homes annually.

The analysis breaks down warehouse rooftop solar potential by county, state House district, and state Senate district, and estimates that **Pennsylvania has 581 million square feet of warehouse rooftop space suitable for solar installations, which could generate 9,391 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity each year.**

"Warehouses are everywhere in Pennsylvania — especially in central PA and suburban communities — and their flat, unobstructed rooftops are ideal for solar," said **Stephen Herzenberg**, Executive Director Emeritus and Economist for Keystone Research Center. "These data make clear that rooftop solar on warehouses can generate massive amounts of clean electricity without consuming farmland or green-field sites, and without the siting and zoning battles that have slowed other solar development."

The data release comes as the Pennsylvania General Assembly is considering legislation to modernize the state's net metering framework, including a "net metering" bill (HB 2348) that addresses solar on warehouses. On March 23, the House passed HB 1260, which would require new

warehouses over 100,000 square feet to be designed with at least 40% of their roof suitable for solar and authorize local tax exemptions for solar-related increases in property value.

Key Findings

- **581 million square feet** of warehouse rooftop space in Pennsylvania is suitable for solar.
- That rooftop space could generate **9,391 GWh of electricity annually.**
- That's enough to power more than **924,000 Pennsylvania households** each year.
- Solar energy is the fastest-growing source of new electricity in the United States, and relatively short construction timelines make solar a key component of efforts to keep the grid reliable and avoid brownouts.
- The potential is spread across the state — from central Pennsylvania's logistics corridors to suburban distribution hubs — offering localized economic and energy benefits in virtually every legislative district.

Interactive Data Available

KRC's full dataset is available on an interactive website at keystoneresearch.org/solar-on-warehouses, featuring:

- A statewide map of warehouse rooftop solar potential by county.

- Sortable tables with data for every state House and Senate district.

- County-level breakdowns of square footage, energy generation potential, and household equivalents.

"Solar on warehouses is a win-win. It puts underutilized roof space to work generating clean, affordable electricity right where people live and work," said **Claire Kovach**, KRC Research Director, who led the analysis. "And our data shows the opportunity exists in every corner of the Commonwealth."

Methodology

KRC's estimates are based on data through year-end 2024 and build on PennEnvironment's 2023 *Solar on Warehouses report*, Northeast city and county Commercial Building Inventory data, QCEW Establishment data for warehouses in Pennsylvania, and the Missouri Census Data Center's Geographic Correspondence Engine (Geocorr 2022). County-level estimates were allocated to state House and Senate districts using a geographic correspondence engine with land area as the weighting variable.

The Keystone Research Center is a nonpartisan economic think tank dedicated to conducting research and advancing policies that promote shared prosperity and economic opportunity for all Pennsylvanians.

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INTERVIEW WITH DEVELOPER MANNY DEMUTIS ON THE FUTURE OF PHOENIXVILLE



DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT By Barry Cassidy

Q: I have received many questions about all the boarded housing on Bridge Street. Are there any future plans for those buildings?

Manny DeMutis: Yes, they will be torn down soon as we begin development of the Steelworks Project, along with the old slaughterhouse in the back. There have been many issues surrounding the project, and for the most part they have been addressed; we are proceeding with the building permit.

Q: They said the property had contamination; is that true?

Manny DeMutis: Yes, like all the properties that composed the old Phoenix Steel property. There was some asbestos contamination that we needed to clean up, as well as floodplain in the footprint.

Q: I know there have always been issues with infill construction on old industrial sites. What are you planning to build on the site? What is Steelworks?

Manny DeMutis: 375 market-rate units will significantly increase the density footprint in Phoenixville's downtown. In addition, those units will be located above 40,000 square feet of ground-floor retail. It is a large project. I believe that when this project is done, downtown Phoenixville could have about 700 more people in the arts and entertainment district. It will have a positive impact on current street retail, leading to an increase in sales volume.

Regarding the streetscape's physical appearance, we will run the electrical wires in conduit beneath the sidewalk rather than on poles along Bridge Street to provide a cleaner, crisper look. We will then install the blue light poles to match the rest of the town, and we have made some improvements to make the corner where Nudy's is located a little more pedestrian-friendly.

Q: What do you envision for the retail portion of the site?

Manny DeMutis: There will be a couple of restaurants and some highly curated retail to complement existing businesses and offer a wider selection of goods. Apparel is always sought after, and there may also be some experience-based attractions that have been popping up in downtowns across the country. Vibrant businesses will thrive in Phoenixville.

Q: How is your hotel in Cape May doing?

Manny DeMutis: Things are going well at the Inn at Cape May. It is mid-summer, and the weather has been nice. The historic hotel is doing good business. I am spending a lot of time there; celebrities are in and out, and cocktails at the bar. It is a very interesting time, and I have a house right across the street.

Q: Do you have entertainment?

Manny DeMutis: Yeah, we have some local and regional bands there on the lawn. If the weather is right and the waves are crashing in the background, it creates a great sense of place. Being a significant historic resource in the hotel, it has a presence in downtown and is a landmark for visitors.

(Continued on page 50)

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DOWNTOWN MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from page 48)

You would be surprised how many people have been coming to the hotel since they were children. Some people come for a week every year during a week that they have set aside for vacation.

The hotel holds many memories for people who have attended events there, had their wedding reception there, or used it as a destination wedding venue. There was a guy the other day who remembers when they made the movie "The Prowler" at the hotel. Bikini-clad ingenues being chased by a guy with a pitchfork.

August is going to be a good month, and we have room for anyone from the 422 Business Advisor area to come down for a visit. We are right on the beach and offer surface parking for our guests. I always thought the days were magical with the cool ocean breeze, but I have come to realize the nights are equally exciting, as Cape May offers a plethora of stores and exceptional places to eat.

Q: Do you have exotic dancers there?

Manny DeMutis: No, we are a family place, but we do have some talented people that dance to the music the bands play. Some guy took over the dance floor last month and danced the flamingo — said he was the next Farruquito. He was very engaging, and people gave him a round of applause when he completed his brief rou-

tine. I was not there, but the manager said he gave him a beer to cool him off after he finished. Stuff like that is an everyday occurrence; the place is a magnet for creative expression.

I. One last question. What about the train? Is the 'ville going to get train service? With all these new people coming to Phoenixville, it appears you are providing what will become Transit Oriented Development.

Q: I have not been too involved in the process, but it is coming. I believe it is the number one train project in Pennsylvania. I know the Mayor and the County Commissioners are working hard to secure passenger rail service. It is something that, like the Steelworks project, takes time and patience to get through the approval process.

When you examine the regulatory environment and approval timelines, it is hard to get things through the system. All well-meaning people are doing what they think is right, so we are in good hands with people looking out for citizens' well-being. The track is there; the scheduling is possible; the signaling has been installed and is complete. I wish you had stayed with the project.

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

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PA STATE LEADERS DELAY \$1.3B IN PAYMENTS TO HELP CREATE BALANCED BUDGET ILLUSION



By Ford Turner,
The Center Square

The “balance” in Pennsylvania’s new state budget for 2026-27 is a bipartisan illusion created by moving numbers around on spreadsheets and ignoring

potentially serious ramifications in the future, according to a lawmakers who voted against it and some outside observers.

A prime target for criticism is an agreement to delay huge medical assistance payments due to managed care organizations. As a result, about \$1.3 billion in payments that were supposed to be made near the end of 2026-27 will instead be scheduled during 2027-28.

So-called “MCO’s” in Pennsylvania include Jefferson Health Plans Everwell, Keystone First, and UnitedHealthcare Community Plan.

“It would be like if you didn’t pay your electric bill for December and then you said, ‘Hey, look at that, my budget for 2026 is balanced,’” said Republican Rep. Brad Roae of Crawford County.

The move means the \$50.8 billion “spend” total for 2026-27 in political press releases about the budget would be more accurately stated as \$52.2 billion, according to Nathan Benefield, chief policy officer for the Commonwealth Foundation, a think tank. Bernie Gallagher, executive director of the Keystone Research Center, another think tank, said the maneuver could end up shifting burdens onto workers and working families.

“It is another way of kicking the can down the road instead of making the difficult decisions needed to secure reliable, recurring revenue — revenue Pennsylvania needs to protect essential

services and invest in working families and communities,” Gallagher said.

No major new sources of revenue were part of the new budget. Left unresolved was a structural deficit of roughly \$4 billion.

Also absent was any indication of a deal on legalizing and taxing skills games, or legalizing and taxing recreational marijuana. In his proposed budget in February, Gov. Josh Shapiro penciled in more than \$2.5 billion from those two sources alone.

Approval of the budget deal came in whirlwind of House and Senate votes in July, 12 days into the fiscal year, followed quickly by a Shapiro signing ceremony.

Nearly all votes against the budget were cast by Republicans. One of them was Sen. Dawn Keefer of York County, who called the delay of medical assistance payments to MCO’s irresponsible. “It is just going to put us in a bind down the road,” she said.

Another was Rep. Kathy Rapp of Warren County. “I am concerned about the accounting maneuvers,” she said. “We all know a fiscal year consists of 12 months. But for medical assistance payments, it is now 11 months.”

It’s not the first time state leaders have agreed to shove payments to MCO’s into a different fiscal year to make a budget appear balanced. A one-month delay of \$400 million in payments was carried out in fiscal year 2014-15. “It is a lever they can use to balance the budget, temporarily,” said Matt Knittel, director of the Independent Fiscal Office.

Other temporary money moves included one in 2017 to approve the issuance of bonds based on future payments from the national tobacco settlement. The immediate proceeds were used to close a budget deficit.

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Education today is about more than earning a traditional degree—it's about gaining practical skills that lead directly to rewarding careers. Across southeastern Pennsylvania, career and technical institutions are helping students of all ages prepare for in-demand jobs through flexible, career-focused programs designed to meet the needs of today's employers.

North Montco Technical Career Center's Continuing Education division in Lansdale offers accelerated training in construction trades, engineering, manufacturing, power and transportation, healthcare, emissions inspection, and commercial driver's license (CDL) programs. New offerings include Preventive Maintenance, Diesel Technician, and EKG Technician training, while hands-on CDL instruction prepares students for Class A, Class B, and School Bus licenses. The emphasis is on practical experience that enables graduates to enter the workforce with confidence.

Montgomery County Community College has built its Workforce Development programs around what it calls a "demand-

driven approach to education," focusing on industries with immediate hiring needs. Students can pursue short-term training in information technology, healthcare, business, and advanced manufacturing while earning valuable industry credentials. Many programs are developed in partnership with employers, ensuring graduates gain skills that are relevant in today's job market.

Reading Area Community College also supports workforce development through its Schmidt Training & Technology Center. Its Management Masterclass equips current and aspiring supervisors with practical leadership skills in organizational strategy, budgeting, manufacturing cost analysis, strategic planning, and team leadership.

Together, these institutions demonstrate how workforce education is creating opportunities for students while helping regional employers fill critical positions. Through flexible scheduling, industry partnerships, and hands-on instruction, they are preparing Pennsylvania's workforce for long-term success.



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NMTCC AND MCIU CAREER CONNECTIONS PARTNER FOR YOUNG ADULT CAREER TRAINING

North Montco Technical Career Center (NMTCC) is proud to partner with Montgomery County Intermediate Unit's Career Connections to expand access to high-quality career training for young adults (18–24 years old). Through this collaboration, Career Connections participants can take advantage of NMTCC's industry-driven evening Machining and Welding programs, designed to prepare students for in-demand careers while offering the flexibility to balance work, family, and other commitments. Together, NMTCC and Career Connections are helping young adults gain the skills, credentials, and confidence needed to build successful careers and meet the workforce needs of the region.

Businesses: The Montgomery County Intermediate Unit is seeking local manufacturers to host paid interns through a Pennsylvania DCED-funded grant. Participating businesses can interview and select candidates, receive up to 200 hours of grant-funded support from Montgomery County residents interested in manufacturing careers, and use the internship as an extended working interview with the opportunity to hire successful

interns at the conclusion of the program. It's a no-cost opportunity to strengthen your entry-level workforce while helping build the next generation of local manufacturing talent. Contact Dan Chominski at Dchominski@mcui.org or fill out the linked interest form on the flyer and we will be in touch!

Interns: Are you 18–24 years old and interested in launching a career in manufacturing? The Montgomery County Intermediate Unit is offering paid manufacturing internships and training scholarships through a Pennsylvania DCED grant for Montgomery County residents. Participants can earn money while gaining up to 200 hours of hands-on experience with a local manufacturer, receive scholarship opportunities for manufacturing training programs, and potentially transition into full-time employment—all with no prior experience required. Fill out the linked interest form on the flyer and someone will be in touch with next steps!

Interest forms for Students and Businesses

<https://forms.gle/2ycBQaMgpRjt9wwYA>
(Students interested in training opportunities)

<https://forms.gle/w4q6m22u5R9xDr7AA>
(Businesses interested in hosting an intern)

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSING PLAN HINGES ON 'AFFORDABLE' NEW BUILDS

By Julia Kramer, The Center Square

Despite Pennsylvania's growing economy, many workers are struggling to find affordable homes near new job opportunities as housing costs continue to rise faster than wages.

In places like Sharpsburg, a small borough five miles north of Pittsburgh, nearly one in five households lives below the poverty line, making the region's median home sale price of \$260,000 out of reach.

"Over one million households in Pennsylvania are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing," said Lt. Gov. Austin Davis during a press conference in the borough last month. "And more than 50 percent of the commonwealth's housing stock is over 50 years old, making it increasingly expensive to maintain."

"[There] is a mismatch between the cost of housing and wages that we've seen both with homeownership and rental units," Lena Andrews Executive Officer of ACTION-Housing said.

As of March, the median home price in Pennsylvania was \$300,000, and current renting costs average at \$1,575 per month. In contrast, household income in Pennsylvania levels at \$77,545.

A shortage of 185,000 homes is predicted by 2035, with the shortfall most impacting low-income families, seniors, and those with disabilities. The Housing Action Plan, announced in February, is the state's first comprehensive housing project. It proposes a \$1 billion Critical Infrastructure Fund to build new affordable homes while bringing down housing costs in existing neighborhoods.

"Pennsylvania's first-ever Housing Action Plan is a critical step forward," Sara Innamorato, the Allegheny County executive, said. "Because one solution to high housing costs is straightforward: we need to build more homes."

As funding for housing from Washington, D.C., is limited, Innamorato stressed the importance of local resources to meet the need.

"It's really difficult to work with them [the federal government] on this issue of affordability, especially affordable housing, so we really need those state and local partnerships to be successful," she said.

However, those at the conference also discussed the reality that funding alone is not enough.



PHOTO: COMMONWEALTH MEDIA SERVICES

Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. Austin Davis speaks during an event in Sharpsburg on May 11, 2026.

"Communities that have affordable housing right now are overwhelmed with affordable housing," said Richard Stephenson, Allegheny County Housing Authority executive director. "What we need to do is get affordable housing into areas we are not in, opportunity areas."

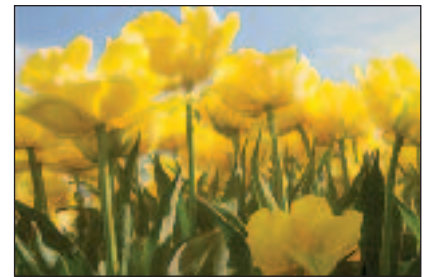
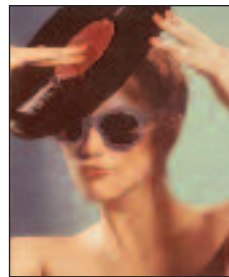
Often, housing efforts focus on providing larger community options, but Stephenson highlighted the effectiveness of using individual homes, which offer opportunities to break generational cycles of public housing dependency. These homes, under Section 8, are made affordable through vouchers and are available for tenants to buy and own. Once purchased, these homes provide tenants with a stable investment that renting cannot.

Andrews agreed with Stephenson's comprehensive approach to meeting housing needs, especially regarding eviction.

"Usually when someone's facing eviction, there are other needs besides just the rental assistance," she said. "You can need legal, or mediation, or housing navigation, or connection to other services."

Andrews explained that the Allegheny Stabilization Housing Collaborative provided many of these additional services to successfully stabilize 1,900 households and help families get back on their feet. Bringing the conversation back to the Housing Action Plan, Andrews said that "the minute they are created [these policies], people really, really benefit from them."

"We want to make sure every community has every opportunity to succeed," David said in closing remarks. "We know we have a lot of work to do, but we are committed to getting that work done."



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STEVE LADNER PHOTOGRAPHY & ART

Since Oct 2024, I have had the privilege of serving as the Cover Photographer for Route 422 Business Advisor. This opportunity has allowed me to help tell the stories of remarkable businesses and the people behind them through my lens. Beyond editorial photography, however, I have for many years created **digital art, mixed media artwork, fashion art, and paintings**, producing collections that range from bold contemporary abstracts to timeless equine portraits and dramatic landscapes.

For more than 30 years, photography has been my profession, my passion, and my way of seeing the world. Every image I create begins with the belief that art should do more than decorate a wall—it should inspire conversation, evoke emotion, and create an atmosphere that reflects your personality.

Whether you're decorating a new home, refreshing an office, or searching for a dis-

tinctive gift, my artwork is designed to transform ordinary walls into memorable spaces. Every piece is created to complement a variety of interiors—from modern and minimalist to traditional and eclectic.

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Published in GQ, Harpers Bazaar, French Vogue,
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