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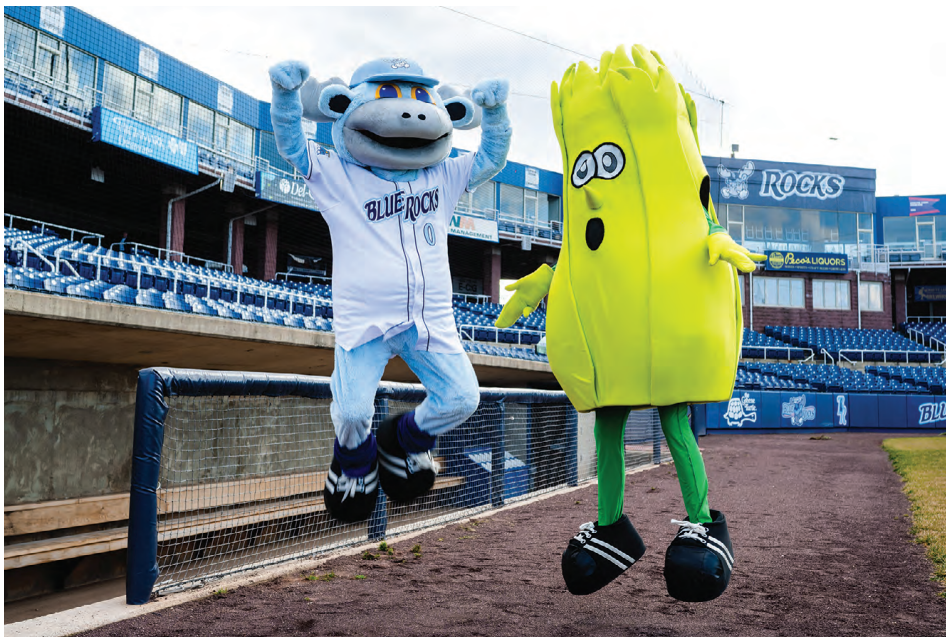
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Wilmington Blue Rocks mascots having a little fun on the Delaware Business photoshoot.

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On the Cover

Wilmington Blue Rocks mascots, Rocky Bluewinkle and Mr. Celery, pose in front of the dugout as the franchise enters its 30th year.
Photo by Nick Wallace Photography

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Message from the President



Michael J. Quaranta

A lot has been said about workforce training and development and how in-demand skills or higher-level job proficiency can lead to a higher income and better standard of living. So, I was fascinated while listening to a video of *The Ramsey Show* where the hosts discussed professions that led to “millionaire” status. The show conducted

research on over 10,000 millionaires and found that the top career fields were engineers, accountants, teachers, managers, attorneys, and sixth was medical doctors.

Wait a minute. Teachers? Yes. The study revealed that it’s not just income that matters, it’s how you manage your life and finances over a long period of time that truly matters. Another interesting data point from the study was that each of these professions are dependent upon systems—building plans, a lesson plan, accounting rules, the legal system. There is a rhythm, a process, and a discipline that comes with different work and some of those habits, exercised over decades on the job, leads to wealth creation. Many people take those same lifelong work habits and personal tendencies and apply those to their personal life. The message is simple: sometimes it’s not just how much you make, but how much you keep, save, and invest.

As we upskill and train people for new or higher wage opportunities, it might be wise to help them understand financial literacy, money management, and how to build wealth for later in life. Many people could benefit from learning more about saving, investing, and budgeting. Debates often focus a lot on wages, income, and salaries—and that’s important. Equally or as this study proves, maybe more important is what you do with your hard-earned income.



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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

A Legislative Recap as the General Assembly Gavels In

BY VERITY WATSON

THERE HAS BEEN a flurry of activity in the state capitol over the last few months, including the beginning of legislative session and the Governor's State of the State and budget proposal, and Joint Finance Committee budget hearings.

Governor John Carney's budget proposal emphasizes long-term sustainable budget growth in the midst of a historic influx of federal dollars flowing to the state. A focus on one-time spending versus growing the base budget continues to be a defining theme of his administration. The proposed operating budget would grow the budget by 4.6 percent from the current year to a total of \$4.99 billion. The proposed bond and capital infrastructure budget totals \$1.18 billion. Some highlights include:

- \$60 million for economic development initiatives, including investing in the strategic and site readiness funds
- \$404.7 million for environmental initiatives—the bulk of which will be focused on clean water projects
- \$20.6 million to increase mental health resources in schools as a result of House Bill 100 led by Representative Valerie Longhurst
- \$11.4 million to continue to protect employers from unemployment insurance increases from COVID-related claims
- \$19.8 million to support the Wilmington Learning Collaborative and implement recommendations from the Redding Consortium

The Governor highlighted initiatives in his State of the State Address that the State Chamber has been actively engaged in. The long-awaited substitute version of the Healthy Delaware Families Act was unveiled in January and incorporated many of the changes asked for by the State Chamber. The new version—which has the full backing of the Governor—was debated and released from the Senate Health and Social Services committee and is expected to be voted on by the full Senate in March. Among other changes, the new bill breaks up the types of leave that will be required to be offered depending on the size of the business. The State Chamber, in partnership with Delaware SHRM and Delmarva SHRM, hosted the bill sponsor, Senator McBride, along with representa-



tives from the Governor's Office, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Finance to discuss the logistics of the proposal, the impact it will have on your business, and remaining concerns. A recording of this discussion is available at www.dscc.com/webinars.

The legislature stood in recess in February while the Joint Finance Committee worked to craft the budget for the next fiscal year. When they return the week of March 8th, there will be a new face in the chamber of the House of Representatives. The resignation of Representative Gerald Brady triggered a special election for his Wilmington seat which, due to redistricting, will relocate to the Long Neck area in Sussex County later this year.

The General Assembly is expected to work expeditiously over the coming months to pass their collective and individual legislative priorities heading into the end of the fiscal year. Given that it is the second leg of the 151st General Assembly, all legislation must

be worked to enactment or will need to be reintroduced in January.



Verity Watson, Ruggerio, Willson & Associates

THE HEALTHY DELAWARE FAMILIES ACT

Healthy Families Mean a Healthy Economy

BY SENATOR SARAH MCBRIDE

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has underscored a simple truth: we can't keep our economy going when we force workers to choose between their job and their family's health.

While eventually conquering this pandemic will bring some workers back into the fold—even before COVID-19—the United States had already fallen behind other countries in workforce participation among critical populations, especially women. Without smarter, long-term reforms, we will fall further behind.

By adopting policies like paid leave that empower people to take care of their health and support caregivers in their responsibilities, we can put people back to work while also doing right by families facing the most human needs.

Modeled after similar programs in other states, the Healthy Delaware Families Act would create a statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program in Delaware. These programs don't just provide a critical support system for both workers and businesses at an affordable price, they are proven to be beneficial for both individual employers and our economy as a whole.

In New York and New Jersey, 71 percent of small businesses said they were supportive of their states' paid leave programs after implementation. In California, more than 90 percent of businesses report that their state paid leave program has either had no impact or a positive impact on the bottom line, with smaller businesses even more likely than large businesses to report those positive impacts.

State paid leave programs are proven to improve workforce participation, including keeping new parents in their jobs and extending the careers of older workers. Recent polling found that 38 percent of unemployed workers said that access to paid family leave policies would make them more likely to return to work sooner.

While paid leave programs put people back to work, we also know they do not lead those who are working to take noticeably more leave. A 2018 survey by the U.S. Department of Labor found that states with paid leave programs did not experience higher rates of workers taking leave for family

or medical-related reasons nor did those states see meaningfully longer work absences than non-paid leave states (only a two-day average increase). The only notable difference was that, unsurprisingly, the workers in states with paid leave were significantly more likely to have been able to access pay during these major life events.

This compelling data reinforces the simple truth: paid leave policies don't create life events or even noticeably increase people taking off, they simply ensure that there is a support system in place for workers and families when they need it.

In January, I reintroduced this legislation with several meaningful compromises after

months of conversations with stakeholders across Delaware, including business owners and chambers of commerce. Nearly every request by the business community was incorporated in some way, including limiting covered relationships, enhancing eligibility to require an employee work for their employer for a year, decreasing the length of certain forms of leave, a longer implementation timeline, and not requiring participation from certain smaller businesses—an unprecedented edit among statewide insurance programs.

When politics so often seems incapable of finding compromise, the Healthy Delaware Families Act proves otherwise. It's a win-win for employers and employees and it will make Delaware both more competitive and compassionate. ■

The purpose of these articles is to provide the platform for two perspectives to be shared. The views are that of the authors.



Senator Sarah McBride represents the First State Senate District, which includes Claymont, Bellefonte, and parts of Edgemoor and Wilmington.



THE HEALTHY DELAWARE FAMILIES ACT

The Unintended Side Effect of Paid Leave

BY JACQUELINE POQUETTE, JD, MBA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP

OPPONENTS OF GOVERNMENT-MANDATED paid family leave point to two reasons: inflexibility and costs imposed on employers. Even if employers do not have to fund the leave, they could face indirect costs from the need to hire replacement workers, coordinate employee schedules, or reassign work tasks. Additionally, a paid-leave mandate could lead to an increase in employee requests for policy changes allotting additional paid time off for those not protected by family paid leave, and may make less money available for pay raises, health insurance, and hiring more workers.

In addition to the financial cost to businesses to provide paid family leave, there are productivity costs as well. When an employee goes on leave for a number of weeks, that employee's tasks need to be covered by other employees in the business, which can lead to a loss of productivity. Even if the business hires a temporary worker to cover the leave, it will need time to onboard and train the employee.

If the goal of government-mandated paid family leave is to help families, then the focus should be on implementing policy options that increase flexibility and choices that families have, not reduce them. Government mandates limit employer flexibility. When employers struggle to comply with expensive or inflexible mandates, it makes it that much harder to accommodate the workers those policies are attempting to help.

It is furthermore not clear that mandated paid family leave is the option families find "friendliest" to their needs. By definition, paid leave creates a strong market bias toward full-time work, since those are the only workers eligible for the benefit. But there is plenty of evidence that flexible work arrangements and the availability of part-time work are highly successful at returning mothers to the workforce.

Now more than ever, employers are struggling to meet the demands of their businesses as they offer the competitive paid-leave programs and flexible-work arrangements necessary to attract and retain employees during a national crisis. Employers strive to develop attractive, cost-effective employee benefit plans that meet both their needs as well as those of the employees. A government mandate imposing a one-size-fits-all policy on businesses takes some of that choice away and creative ideas



for providing paid leave—such as paid-time-off purchase plans that allow workers who want more leave to purchase additional paid time off either through employer flex credits or salary reductions with pretax dollars—will be no longer be available.

Since the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 almost 30 years ago, organizations, especially those under 50 employees have found ways to meet the needs of their employees while keeping their doors open so they can continue to serve the community. So, let's allow businesses to continue making creative decisions that solve the unique needs of their individual workforces. ■

The purpose of these articles is to provide the platform for two perspectives to be shared. The views are that of the authors.



Jacqueline Poquette, JD, MBA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, is the director of the Delaware SHRM State Council.



2022 PRIORITIES FOR DELAWARE

*This list of policy priorities impact businesses, both large and small,
in every industry across the state of Delaware.*

WORKFORCE

- Promote policies that sharpen the state government's focus on upskilling and retraining the workforce
 - Encourage public spending policies that accelerate training and skills upgrades to meet employer needs
 - Oppose policies that artificially move wages or impose benefit requirements
 - Find opportunities that create durable soft skills in employees and incentivize employers to accelerate the advancement of new hires
- Create employment opportunities with an emphasis on building trades, technology, health care, and logistics
- Support employer-led diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives
- Support employer-led child care initiatives
- Work to find alternative health care insurance plans that include essential health benefits

FISCAL POLICY

- Encourage timely and strategic spending of federal resources on infrastructure and one-time investments
- Support financial investment in the state's rainy day fund and budget smoothing effort
- Back tax policies that incentivize workforce training

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Continue to support Ready in 6 policy reforms
- Support expanded site readiness
- Ensure the completion of Coastal Zone regulations and improvement of sites

ENVIRONMENT

- Monitor developments related to state Climate Action Plan
- Support the cleanup of Brownfields

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Member news & Notes

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: **Ronald McDonald House of Delaware** BY REGINA DONATO

» There is a lot to be said about the power of community. During times of hardship, a helping hand is not just welcomed but needed. There are few things more difficult than being told your child is critically ill or injured. The emotional and physical toll this takes on a family can be high, between long nights spent in hospital waiting rooms and watching their child be subjected to aggressive treatment sessions. The Ronald McDonald House of Delaware exists to alleviate some of this burden and provide lodging, comfort, and support to these families in times of need.

The Ronald McDonald House of Delaware (RMHDE) opened their doors in 1991, located across from Nemours Children's Hospital. What began as a 17-room facility has since expanded to 50 guest rooms for the families of sick children being treated at area hospitals. They have since expanded to provide family rooms within local health care facilities, to extend the comfort of a Ronald McDonald House to a hospital setting. "Our main mission is to provide these families with a home-away-from-home in their time of need," says President and CEO Pam Cornforth.

Besides offering lodging for families, the Ronald McDonald House of Delaware also delivers a variety of other programming and support for their guests. Their meal program, typically provided by volunteer community

groups, underwent change during the pandemic and now relies on financial donations to purchase meals until volunteers can return. They also provide various activities for guests throughout the year, including bingo nights, crafts, and pet therapy sessions.

The newest addition to the facility is a state-of-the-art Multi-Sensory room for guests with sensory processing needs. "It's a room that can either be relaxing or stimulating depending on the individual," explains Operations Director Katie Johnson. "Our staff are all trained in a sensory certification to help keep the families private and support them in getting oriented to the room." This room can be utilized by anyone within the family who may benefit from it and is a certified Sensory-Inclusive Environment through KultureCity.

What's in store for the future? At the Ronald McDonald House, diversity, equity and inclusion has been a big focus recently as they are always striving to be an inclusive environment for both volunteer staff and families. Another goal for the near future is to rebuild their volunteer programs. Due to the pandemic, many of their volunteer programs were placed on hold due to the high-risk nature of many of their patients.

While volunteer programs are currently on hold, the Ronald McDonald House



is always searching for donations from their wish list: everyday items like paper towels, toilet paper, and nonperishable goods make all the difference. You can also support the House by attending one of their many fundraisers throughout the year. Your assistance makes it possible for the Ronald McDonald House to provide their vital support free-of-charge to families.

"I'm in awe of the contributions that we received and the support during really a trying time for all of us," remarks Cornforth. "A huge shout out to everyone in Delaware; everyone has been so generous. We as an organization are truly indebted to the commitment that the community has made in our organization. We are forever thankful for that."

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: **Associates International, Inc.** BY REGINA DONATO

» It's undeniable that the invention of the printing press was one of the most defining moments in human history. Centuries later, we are now moving into a digital world. Books and newspapers have long been exchanged by many for their digital counterparts, with content being digested on phones, tablets, and computers. This rapid digitalization was only expedited with the onset of a global pandemic, forcing millions to work and learn from their personal devices at home.

And yet, print remains an important industry that many still utilize, which makes the remaining printing businesses like Wilmington-based Associates International, Inc. all-the-more important.

Associates International, Inc. (AI) was founded in 1973 as a local typesetting services company, and they subsequently expanded into commercial printing. Today, they are a full-service provider of print and digital marketing solutions across numerous professional industries. You may be familiar with their work—this very article was printed in a magazine produced by AI. However, AI is not immune to the challenges that being a company who sells print in a digital world comes with. According to Joe Farley, Jr., COO of Associates International, approximately 80 percent of the work they produce is still commercial print. But the other 20 percent comes from packaging, promotional items, website development, ecommerce platforms, and their in-house digital marketing service: Ai360.



Like many other businesses, the pandemic forced AI to quickly adapt to the rapidly changing world around them. "What was probably a five-to-seven-year transformation to more of a digital marketing and communications world got accelerated into 18 months due to the pandemic," Farley explains. The need for certain print pieces severely diminished with the onset of lockdowns and capacity holds. Print menus were foregone for QR codes and tradeshow materials were made obsolete as events moved virtual.

A reduced need for their core line of products is not the only issue Associates International and other manufacturers have run into. There are simply not enough workers for the skilled labor positions they desperately need to fill. Those who are seeking manufacturing jobs are often going to the larger conglomerate businesses and warehouses, who can offer attractive signing bonuses and higher pay. Retraining programs like Forward Delaware or encouraging training pro-

grams to graduating high school seniors is a start, but in the short-term finding workers for small businesses continues to be a challenge. To combat this, AI has started offering competitive signing bonuses and increased benefit packages to attract new employees and retain current ones.

Supply chain issues are another problem entirely. "Our core product is print, and we are facing significant challenges sourcing paper," remarks Farley. "As strange as that sounds. We have lost significant business over the last six-to-eight weeks because we can't get the

raw materials to produce what our clients are asking us to." In response, AI has taken to working with clients to project future work, therefore prioritizing material sourcing months in advance.

While some believe our society has begun to move away from print, Farley and others within the industry are confident this classic mode of communication is here to stay. "We are moving towards a more personalized era of print," says Farley. "It is evolving much like any other form of communication. As opposed to large runs of static pieces, you will get individualized pieces tailored to your customers. A direct mail campaign five years ago might have consisted of 10,000 postcards dropped to targeted geographical areas. Today, that same campaign would be drilled down to 3,000 targeted households with the same offer also served digitally." At the end of the day, the way you reach your customers is evolving, and successful companies are evolving with it.

DIVERSE SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT:

Traffic Management, Inc. BY COLIN HEFFINGER

» Infrastructure is the driving foundation of society throughout our nation. It leads to roads, bridges, buildings, water supply, and more that empower business operations every day. These structures need to be regularly fortified, which leads to road closures and complex construction sites. To achieve a high level of safety and efficiency, traffic management is a necessity during these critical times. Traffic Management, Inc.—a business started out of Long Beach, California—has rapidly expanded to become the largest minority-owned traffic control business in the country by prioritizing safety in response to these growing needs.

Traffic Management, Inc. (TMI) was founded in 1995 by two brothers of Latino descent, Jonathan and Chris Spano, in their great grandmother's garage. The brothers started out with a couple customers and continuously expanded their offerings over the years, introducing a variety of work zone equipment as well as engineering and permitting services. TMI now has 40 branches spanning across 13 states.

As the largest minority-owned business in the traffic management industry, TMI prides itself in having a diverse staff and highlighting its focus on safety training. "We make an effort to innovate the traffic industry," explains Amy Patton, marketing content specialist for TMI. "Our goal is to make a career for people who want to get involved. We pride ourselves in having trained employees and the right equipment and technology in hand."



"Our slogan is that we're 'Serious About Safety,'" Patton continues. "Our employees spend several days in courses and then three days shadowing in the field to build confidence and a safety-focused mindset. We also provide emergency response services to help local utility companies repair electricity issues during storms. Our road closures ensure safety for the community and surrounding areas."

TMI is heading toward its one-year anniversary for the opening of its first Delaware branch, located at 314 Bay West Boulevard in New Castle. During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in May 2020, TMI managed traffic control for a two-month water pipe replacement project on I-95. This project highlighted opportunities working with Delaware businesses, opening the doors for continued growth in the state. Since its start, the New Castle location has expanded to offer its services across the state.

Patton reflects on future opportunities for TMI. "We are committed to innovating how people think about traffic management in the community and construction industry," she states. "As the new infrastructure bill continues, we're expecting a large amount of development projects in the future. Our products and services play a critical role in establishing safe road closures for these constructions. We're looking forward to contributing to this huge overhaul for American infrastructure."

The New Castle branch of Traffic Management, Inc. is currently searching for new talent to join its rapidly growing team. Individuals interested in investing in themselves and the community can discover more information at www.trafficmanagement.com/careers/.

Banking for All

M&T BANK EXPANDS FINANCIAL ACCESS TO ETHNICALLY, RACIALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES IN DELAWARE

» M&T Bank is expanding the services it provides to communities with high concentrations of ethnic and racial diversity by designating eight bank branches in Delaware as multicultural banking centers and contributing \$100,000 to a loan program and other resources intended to help Latino and Black small-businesses owners thrive in Sussex County.

maintains throughout its Northeast and mid-Atlantic footprint.

In Sussex County, M&T is supporting the work of La Plaza, a nonprofit partnership designed to increase the economic stability, prosperity, and financial assets of Latinos through business and leadership development and personal financial coaching. La Plaza coordinates the expertise of its nonprofit

is based at La Esperanza Community Center in Georgetown, Del.;

- providing entrepreneurs access to a 12-week technical assistance and business plan program—developed by West End Neighborhood House—in English and Spanish; and,
- starting a loan pool administered by True Access Capital that will make loans of \$2,500 to \$10,000 to small businesses, the first of which will be to recent graduates of the entrepreneur assistance program.

The expansion of M&T's multicultural banking centers and support of La Plaza service collaborative are part of the bank's mission to be culturally fluent for all communities, especially as the state becomes more diverse. The number of Delawareans who identified as Hispanic or Latino increased from 8.2 percent in 2010 to 10.5 percent in 2020, according to the latest U.S. Census. That growth was especially strong in Sussex County, which saw a 58 percent increase in respondents identifying as Hispanic or Latino, according to census data.

"As this demographic shift accelerates throughout Delaware, our multicultural banking initiative allows us to continuously meet the changing needs of our communities," said Nick Lambrow, M&T's regional president for Delaware. "With our recent designation of new multicultural banking centers and support of services for the Latino and Black communities in Sussex County, we are demonstrating our clear intention to be the bank for all communities."



The newly designated multicultural banking centers will offer banking and other financial services in customers' preferred languages and employ bankers from the community who understand the cultural nuances of the individuals and communities they serve. These eight branches are among the 36 branches M&T has in Delaware and the 118 multicultural banking centers the bank

partners in business and financial coaching, business plan development, micro-lending, and leadership development into a comprehensive bilingual package for the Latino community. To support the work of La Plaza, M&T is represented on its advisory board and contributed \$100,000 toward:

- helping to fund the employment of La Plaza's business/financial coach, who

Jordon Rosen Retires

» Jordon N. Rosen, CPA, AEP® (Distinguished), director of estates and trusts, retired from Belfint, Lyons & Shuman, P.A. (BLS)



on December 31, 2021 with more than 21 years of service at BLS and over 43 years in public accounting.

Rosen began his two-decades-long career at BLS on November 6, 2000, when he joined as a principal with a specialty in tax. He was admitted as a shareholder and director on December 1, 2003 and went on to develop and expand a robust estate, gift, and trust practice. His commitment to this practice group reaped a personal reward when he was inducted into the NAEPC Estate Planning Hall of Fame in 2020 – an event that Jordon cites as one of the most gratifying of his career.

“Without a doubt, my entire career, especially the past 21 years at BLS CPAs, has been exciting and rewarding. BLS has been my second home and my clients have been my second family. It has been both a pleasure and honor to have worked alongside such strong professionals and amazing clients. I leave the firm and the profession with many memories and no regrets.” said Rosen.

The DSCC extends a special congratulations and thanks to Jordon who volunteered his time and expertise on our Tax Committee for many years!

COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT: Employer Advocacy

BY TYLER MICIK

» Members of the State Chamber's Employer Advocacy Committee met in late January for their first meeting of the year. The committee was joined by Secretary of Labor Karryl Hubbard, who gave an update on the Department of Labor (DOL), sharing their policy priorities and current projects. Late last year, the DOL composed a list of five goals or pillars known as the *Department of Labor Framework for the Future*:

1. Ensuring equity and opportunity for all
2. Fostering safe jobs and fair workplaces
3. Publishing statistics and analysis for internal use and stakeholders
4. Marketing and branding of services
5. Continued pandemic recovery

The committee was also joined by the Department's Barry Butler and Thomas “Chip” Riddleberger who highlighted the Delaware JobLink, one resource offered by the DOL. Delaware JobLink is a self-service tool for employers to post job openings and find and hire candidates.

“Currently there are around 19,000 active jobs posted on Delaware JobLink for candidates to research and apply to and about 9,000 resumes for employers to find candidates,” said Butler. Additionally, last year, the DOL hosted and assisted with over

35 job fairs throughout the state. Services like Delaware JobLink play an important role in connecting employers with job seekers at a time when employers are

struggling to fill open positions. To find out more about Delaware JobLink, visit joblink.delaware.gov.

Committee members also reviewed several important policy issues, including paid family and medical leave and recreational marijuana legalization. First, SS 1 for SB 1—or the Healthy Delaware Families Act—creates a statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program. This latest version has undergone substantial revisions from the original bill that was introduced last year. Employers with 25 or more employees are required to provide up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave and up to 6 weeks paid medical and family caregiving leave. Employers with 10 or more employees but less than 25 are only required to provide up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave. Under current law, small businesses, those with 50 or fewer employees, are exempt from the 1993 Federal FMLA law. Second, HB 305—the Delaware Marijuana Control Act—would allow adults over the age of 21 to legally possess and consume under one ounce of marijuana for personal use. It does not permit individuals to grow their own marijuana.

Participants on our policy committees are instrumental in helping the State Chamber review bills, develop feedback, and recommend amendments. Consider joining the conversation and help shape policy in the First State by joining a committee. Contact Tyler at tmicik@dsc.com to learn more.

Delaware Businesses Honored for Supporting Military and Veteran Talent

» The Joint Military Affairs Committee (JMAC) of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and New Castle County Chamber of Commerce named Zip Code Wilmington and M. Davis & Sons, Inc. as 2022 recipients of the Delaware Warrior Friendly Business Award. This honor recognizes businesses' efforts to support service members, veterans, and their family members through workplace initiatives.

Zip Code Wilmington (Under 50 Employees):

Hiring service members and veterans is always top of mind for Zip Code Wilmington, and that starts at the top with the organization's executive director, Desa Burton. She is a U.S. Navy veteran who spent ten years as a Surface Warfare Officer in the U.S. Navy and Naval Reserve.

In addition, Zip Code Wilmington is aligned with the Department of Veteran Affairs' Veterans Employment Through Technology Education (VET TEC) program—the only technical training program in the region—and as a result, can extend the reach



and accessibility of its coding school to students of all backgrounds. The program provides the resources for individuals to learn and grow their technical, interpersonal, and leadership skills so that they attain a competitive developer job and increase their earning potential



post military-life. During this process, Zip Code Wilmington has also provided tuition reimbursement under the VET TEC program since 2019. VET TEC is designed to help veterans find employment options in the high-demand technology industry to successfully transition into their future careers.

"Zip Code Wilmington has a long-standing commitment to providing high-caliber training opportunities for active-duty service members and their spouses, veterans, and those serving in the region's National Guard units as they transition into civilian careers," said Burton. "Underemployment is a big challenge for the military community. Zip Code Wilmington is proud to be one of the first software bootcamps in the country to offer VET TEC funding, and we are honored to support our military community with upskilling or reskilling opportunities that lead to high-demand, good-paying software developer jobs."

M. Davis & Sons, Inc. (Over 50 Employees):

For a long while now, M. Davis & Sons has looked to grow their field force and engineers by recruiting from the

military with a high level of interest. Currently, 23 veterans are full-time employees of the company.

M. Davis & Sons is involved with the U.S. Department of Defense SkillBridge Program, which recruits from all branches of the military worldwide and allows participants to enter a program from a participating company and work for six months for that company while maintain-

ing their military status and pay. M. Davis & Sons also created an internal "Pre-Apprenticeship Program" which allows these military people to work for three-to-six months in one or more trades to gain more exposure. Upon completing the program, trainees could be offered a full-time position with enrollment in a paid apprenticeship program. Additionally, M. Davis & Sons offers in-house craft training classes for welding, electrical, and project management.



"We have a lot of people who are very invested in working with our military veterans and they see the value of their experience and training," stated John Gooden, president & COO of M. Davis & Sons, Inc. "We are honored to receive an award for working to bring more veterans into our workforce."

The honorees were recognized at the JMAC's State of the Guard Address on February 25, which included the annual State of the Guard briefing to the community on current missions, operations, and people of the Delaware National Guard.



Chair Message

BY NICK LAMBROW

»» The sound you've heard coming from Dover the past few months has

been that of the Joint Finance and Bond Bill committees crunching the numbers on Governor Carney's plan to spend almost \$6.2 billion during the fiscal year that starts July 1.

Before long we'll get the General Assembly's take on the Governor's spending plan and learn whether they agree with his proposal to spend a record \$4.99 billion on the State's operating expenses and another \$1.18 billion on capital projects. (When this message was written, Governor Carney had just unveiled his budget plan and we were all just beginning to digest it.)

To be sure, \$6.2 billion is a massive sum of money—one aided by a more than \$800 million anticipated revenue surplus in FY22 and complemented by the nearly \$2 billion in federal funds Delaware will receive from President Biden's infrastructure law.

Regardless of where the dust settles on the overall amount the State allocates for spending this coming year, it's important we understand the value of every dollar on the table right now. It's critical to the future success of our state that the business community works together and speaks with a powerful voice when our elected leaders are deciding how

best to put this robust budget to work for Delawareans.

We're standing at a critical point in Delaware's economic future—the intersection of the Great Resignation and the Hopeful Recovery. Delaware is brimming

ing our greatest workforce needs and organizing around replicable ways of fulfilling them. We have an opportunity to lead the conversations that could help remove obstacles limiting the state's prosperity if our many voices are delivering a shared message.

Let's start with a commitment to invest in people. Let's put the state's money into the initiatives and initiatives that give Delawareans a better chance to make a better life for themselves and their families. And while it makes sense to put some of those funds into the programs that already exist, it's our job—at this critical moment—to identify and support alternatives that others may not be thinking of or know exist.

Workforce development is one of the State Chamber's top policy priorities this year for this reason. We need to direct greater resources—notably funding—toward the policies and programs that boost workforce training and employee upskilling, promote job opportunities in health care, technology,

the trades and other industries, and enable employers to offer greater benefits and better pay. Artificial wage hikes and benefits aren't always the solution to attracting and retaining a talented workforce.

The state's coffers are full. It's time to spend wisely for Delaware's future. We have an opportunity to create a legacy moment for our state. It's time to invest in Delaware's workforce.



We're standing at a critical point in Delaware's economic future—the intersection of the Great Resignation and the Hopeful Recovery.

with businesses that want to grow—but many of these businesses have more job openings than they do candidates to fill them. Meanwhile, our workforce is reassessing what it wants from an employer—and willing to sit out until they find what they're looking for.

This is where we come in. This is where Delaware's business community must be part of the solution by identify-



Citizen airmen and soldiers from the Delaware National Guard provide support to local hospitals during the COVID surge, January 2022.

Working Together to Combat a Crisis in the First State

DNG MEMBERS RECEIVE CNA TRAINING IN WAKE OF PANDEMIC SURGE

CONTRIBUTED BY DELAWARE TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

» When the latest COVID-19 surge overwhelmed the state's health care system, forcing several hospitals to implement Crisis Standards of Care, Governor John Carney, the Delaware Healthcare Association, the Delaware National Guard, and Delaware Technical Community College quickly teamed up to help.

Eighty-four members of the Delaware National Guard (DNG) completed certified nursing assistant (CNA) training at

Delaware Tech to assist with staffing needs for health care providers state-wide. The training is usually provided over a period of six to 10 weeks, but the College compressed it into an accelerated two-week program given the urgent situation at hand.

The plan to train the DNG was sparked by Wayne A. Smith, president and chief executive officer of the Delaware Healthcare Association, who knew Minnesota had implemented a rapid

Certified Nurse Training Program for their National Guard members to augment workforce in long-term care facilities. He thought a similar effort in Delaware would help support patient transfers from his stressed hospital members.

"The Governor quickly embraced the idea, and I approached Delaware Tech to discuss whether or not this could happen," Smith stated. "Del Tech's design and implementation occurred with impressive speed. This has helped save lives."



Citizen airmen and soldiers from the Delaware National Guard received Certificates of Appreciation from the State of Delaware's Department of Health and Human Services, while they are providing CNA care to local long-term care facilities during Delaware's January 2022 COVID surge.

Paul Morris, vice president for Workforce Development and Community Education at Delaware Tech, said, "Delivering a rigorous curriculum with such a compressed schedule resulted in some long days, but by the end of the program, 83 DNG members passed the written and skills assessments allowing them to work as licensed CNAs in Delaware."

The newly trained CNAs were then assigned to health care facilities, rehabilitation centers, and long-term care facilities throughout Delaware. Pfc. Charles Nelson of Middletown received a text message about the CNA training seven hours after he returned from basic training in early January.

"I feel like this is the selfless service aspect of being a soldier, and I'm definitely fulfilling that duty," he said.

Nelson's experience working at Cadia Healthcare Capitol, a long-term care center in Dover, also has helped him develop a new respect for those working in the health care field.

"The people who do this job have some of the biggest hearts I've ever seen," he said.

Spc. Christopher Gordon of Middletown also learned firsthand the challenges of working in the health care field, which is a much different experience than his regular National Guard work as a military police officer.

"This work here isn't easy," he said. "The nurses here are very busy, so I feel like our assistance is very helpful to them. Just being there for them helps a lot."

While Gordon said the CNA assignment is one he never expected, he welcomed the opportunity to obtain experience in a new career field.

"The partnership that the Delaware National Guard and Delaware Tech created is proof that when in need, different agencies and organizations in the state of Delaware can step up and support the state in any emergency or crisis," said Bernie Kale, director of public affairs for the Delaware National Guard. "Without hesitation, Delaware Tech offered their support to our 84 citizen soldiers and airmen to train them in a technically dense career field."

Dr. Ken Silverstein, chief clinical executive for ChristianaCare, said the help was greatly needed.

"We are grateful that members of the National Guard are providing additional support to our health care workers at Christiana and Wilmington hospitals during this challenging time," he said. "The health care workforce is stretched thin due to the recent surge in COVID-19 and the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. We continue to urge everyone in the community to take the following steps to support our health care workers and reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Everyone age 5 and older should get vaccinated for COVID-19.
- Everyone age 12 and older should get a booster dose when they are eligible.
- Practice COVID-19 safety: Wear a mask, avoid gathering indoors, practice social distancing, and wash hands frequently. It's important to follow these steps even in places where safety guidelines are relaxed or where safety instructions aren't posted.
- Do not go to the emergency room unless you are experiencing a medical emergency.
- If you're sick, assume it's COVID-19, and stay home except to get a test. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care. Get rest and stay hydrated. Take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen, to help you feel better. Call your doctor if your symptoms are severe or worsening. Get care or call 911 if you have trouble breathing or have any other emergency warning signs, or if you think it is an emergency."

\$1.075 Million Awarded to Support Homeless Services in Delaware

» Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh (FHLBank Pittsburgh) announced \$1.075 million in Home4Good funding awarded to programs across the state working to reduce homelessness. The funding will be used to address three key areas: homelessness diversion, rapid re-housing, and innovation.

Grants were awarded to 13 programs from ten Delaware organizations, including Brandywine Counseling and Community Services; Catholic Charities, Inc.; Family Promise of Northern NCC; Ministry of Caring, Inc.; People's Place II; Salvation Army; The Way Home; West End Neighborhood House, Inc.; and YWCA Delaware, Inc.

"I applaud the many partners who are helping our neighbors find shelter," said Senator Tom Carper, "and thank FHLBank Pittsburgh, the Delaware State Housing Authority, and their members and housing partners for coming together to help families in our great state receive housing funding and services."

"Every Delawarean should have a place to call home, and this funding is one of the most crucial ways to make sure we accomplish that," said Senator Chris Coons. "Home4Good strengthens our existing resources and infrastructure by supporting organizations that are already doing great work to assist those in our state facing homelessness."

"We know that far too many Delawareans are experiencing homelessness in our state," said



"Every Delawarean should have a place to call home, and this funding is one of the most crucial ways to make sure we accomplish that." — Senator Chris Coons

Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester. "This Home4Good funding will be instrumental in helping Delaware organizations continue to provide support and resources to individuals and families experiencing homelessness across the state."

Home4Good was established by FHLBank Pittsburgh and has been combined with DSHA funds to combat homelessness with the support of FHLBank member financial institutions. The funding is distributed as grants to organizations that help individuals retain or find housing, provide supportive services or address other unmet needs

within the existing homeless provider network. Home4Good is one of several ways that FHLBank partners with its members to provide needed funding and support communities.

"We're honored to be a part of this initiative and proud to support the organizations working to address homelessness through a multitude of different approaches," said DSHA Director Eugene R. Young, Jr. "From rapid re-housing to innovation, each program plays a valuable role in ensuring Delawareans have access to housing opportunities and support services."

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State Pass-through Entity Taxes Provide Benefit for Business Owners

BY ALEX MASCIANTONIO, CPA

BUSINESS OWNERS may be eligible for a relatively new tax benefit in many states known as pass-through entity taxes. This tax benefit is available to pass-through entities such as S corporations, partnerships, and LLCs taxed as S corporations or partnerships.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 generally limits an individual taxpayer's federal itemized deduction for state and local income taxes to \$10,000. This provision caused angst among taxpayers in states which impose relatively high income taxes, such as New Jersey and New York. In response to the provision, many states enacted entity-level taxes on pass-through entities. The entity-level tax circumvents the \$10,000 tax deduction limitation because the tax is considered imposed on the entity—not the individual owners. The IRS permitted the federal tax deduction for state pass-through entity taxes in IRS Notice 2020-75.

Many states allow the taxpayer to elect the entity-level tax treatment. In some states the entity-level tax treatment is mandatory. States who enacted pass-through entity taxes include Maryland, New Jersey, New York, California, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin, among others. Delaware, Ohio, and Pennsylvania are some states which have not yet enacted pass-through entity taxes.

An example is a Delaware S corporation that operates in multiple states including California and is owned completely by one person. Assume that California imposes \$50,000 in income-based taxes on the shareholder or the entity if the pass-through entity tax is elected. Before enactment of the California entity-level tax, the California income-based taxes would be limited to a \$10,000 federal tax deduction on the owner's personal tax return. Electing the new California pass-through entity tax permits the S corporation to take a tax deduction for the entire \$50,000, resulting in at least an additional \$40,000 federal tax deduction for the owner.

An analysis can be performed to determine whether electing the state pass-through entity taxes is advantageous. The taxpayer's exposure to state taxes relative to the \$10,000 general limit should be evaluated. The entity-level state tax rate should be compared to the relevant personal state tax rate. The complexity and cost of compliance with electing the entity-level taxes should also be analyzed.

Another factor to consider is potential future tax rule changes. The personal federal itemized deduction limit for state and local income taxes



could be increased from the current \$10,000 threshold. An increase to this limit could make pass-through entity state taxes no longer beneficial for taxpayers who fall under the new threshold. Potential future IRS and state rules in this relatively new area could also impact decision making.

Pass-through business owners should consider whether electing state entity-level tax treatment is advantageous. Eligible high-income taxpayers may obtain a significant tax benefit. This is an area with evolving rules and should be closely monitored by applicable taxpayers and tax professionals. ■



Alex Masciantonio, CPA is a tax partner with Gunnip & Company LLP in Wilmington, Delaware.

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Child Tax Credits

How expanded benefits and advance payments
will impact 2021 tax returns **BY VALERIE C. MIDDLEBROOKS, CPA**

MANY AMERICANS RECEIVED advanced payments in the second half of 2021 as part of legislation focused on providing additional benefits to taxpayers eligible to claim child tax credits (CTC). The following is an overview of the old rules, the new rules for 2021, and a review of the related tax implications.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), enacted on March 11, 2021, expanded and enhanced the child tax credit. Before the ARPA, the CTC was limited to \$2,000 per “qualifying child” and the age of such child had to be under 17. The \$2,000 CTC was phased out for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income (AGI) of over \$400,000 for joint filers, and \$200,000 for all other filers. The CTC was also partially refundable.

Under the ARPA for tax year 2021, the CTC was temporarily modified as follows:

- The definition of qualifying child broadened to include a child who hasn’t turned 18 by the end of 2021.

- The CTC increased to \$3,000 per child age six or older and \$3,600 per child under age six at the close of 2021. The increased credit amounts are phased out at modified AGI of over \$75,000 for single filers, \$112,500 for heads-of-households, and \$150,000 for joint filers. The first phaseout reduces the CTC by \$50 for each \$1,000 (or fraction thereof) by which modified AGI exceeds these income thresholds.

It is important to emphasize that the first level of phaseouts only applies to the temporarily increased credit amounts for 2021 and not to the \$2,000 base amount permitted under existing law. Taxpayers who are not eligible to claim the increased CTC in 2021 (because their AGI is too high) can still claim a regular CTC of up to \$2,000 per child subject to the existing phaseouts described in the opening paragraph.

- The CTC is fully refundable for 2021 for taxpayers with a principal place of abode in the U.S. for more than one-half of the tax year. This means that a taxpayer does not need income or need to owe tax in 2021 to receive the full amount of eligible CTC. Refunds, including any

remaining entitled CTC amounts, may also be subject to offset for tax debts or other federal or state debts owed.

Please note that the \$500 nonrefundable credit amount for “other dependents” has not changed. Other dependents include children who are 18 or older, parents, and qualifying relatives supported by the taxpayer.

The ARPA also required the IRS to establish a temporary advance payment program. The payments were calculated by the IRS based on their estimate of the taxpayers 2021 CTC. Depending on what was on file with the IRS, 2019 or 2020 returns were used to calculate the advance payments. Each payment was calculated as 1/12 of the annual advance amount for the calendar year. The payments were required to be made from July 2021 through December 2021.

So, what does all of this mean for filing 2021 tax returns?

Taxpayers who received advance CTC payments from the IRS must reconcile those payments on their 2021 tax returns. Payments made in excess of the allowable CTC may need to be repaid. Taxpayers who received less than the amount they are eligible for will be able to claim a credit for the remaining amount on their 2021 returns.

Tools available from the IRS

To help taxpayers reconcile and receive 2021 CTCs, the IRS started sending out “Letter 6419” in January 2022. If the advanced CTC payments were based upon a married filing joint tax return, the taxpayer and the spouse will each receive their own letter. This letter includes the total amount of advance CTC payments taxpayers received in 2021 and the number of qualifying children used to calculate the advance payments. However, it is important to note that the IRS has acknowledged some of the letters may contain incorrect or out-of-date information. To confirm information, taxpayers can obtain the total amount of advance CTC payments that were disbursed from the IRS’s Child Tax Credit Update Portal or a taxpayers IRS Online Account.

The IRS also revised “Schedule 8812” to calculate the taxpayers eligible child tax credits, reconcile advance child tax credit payments received in 2021, and figure out additional credits or tax owed. To help even further, the IRS issued a set of frequently asked questions regarding the expanded CTC on January 31, 2022, which can be found here: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/newsroom/fs-2022-06.pdf>

In summary, the 2021 CTC enhancements will certainly be beneficial to many taxpayers; however due diligence needs to be taken on the taxpayers’ part to 1) Gather the appropriate information, 2) calculate the maximum eligible credit, and 3) reconcile any advance payments received on your 2021 tax return. Still unsure? Reach out to your tax advisor and they will be able to assist and happy tax filing season to everyone! ■



Valerie C. Middlebrooks, CPA is director of tax and small business at Belfint, Lyons & Shuman, CPAs.

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Contact Tyler Micik at tmicik@dsc.com



There's an App for That

New \$600 reporting requirement for businesses using PayPal or other payment apps **BY KIMBERLY ZARETT AND JACKIE ZHANG**

IF YOU'RE A SMALL BUSINESS OWNER and use payment apps like PayPal, Venmo, Zelle, or Cash App to receive payments for goods or services, it is more likely that your sales information will be reported to the IRS by these third-party settlement organizations (TPSOs) beginning with the 2022 tax year.

Previously, TPSOs only reported to the IRS if you received more than \$20,000 in gross revenue and at least 200 transactions. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, commonly known as the COVID-19 stimulus bill of 2021, made a change to the income reporting process. Now, the IRS requires TPSOs to report if they process \$600 or more in gross payments during the year, regardless of the number of transactions.

Form 1099-K, Payment Card and Third-Party Network Transactions, are used to report certain payment transactions to improve voluntary tax compliance. According to the IRS, you should receive Form 1099-K by January 31st if, in the prior calendar year, you received reportable payments. Payment card transactions such as gift card, credit card, debit card, or third-party network transactions such as payments received

through PayPal, Venmo or other payments apps would be counted as reportable payments if they are for goods or services.

This new reporting requirement only applies to transactions for the provision of goods or services. Transactions that are personal in nature, such as gifts or reimbursements, are excluded from Form 1099-K reporting. For example, friends sending money to reimburse each other for splitting a dinner should not be included. As a result, it is important for you as a business owner to make sure your profile in the payment app is updated. Payment app providers rely on the users to help classify the reportable versus non-reportable transactions. For example, Venmo has an updated FAQ that states "customers may receive an in-app notification or email ... asking to confirm the information they use when filing their taxes. ... By providing this information, customers will be able to continue using their Venmo account to seamlessly accept payments for goods and services without any issue in 2022 and beyond."

Besides updating your profile, you should also make sure that you keep good records. When you receive Form 1099-K in 2023 for the 2022 tax

year, it will show the gross amount of all reportable payment transactions. The IRS defines the “gross amount” of reportable transactions as the total unadjusted dollar amount of aggregate payment transactions. In other words, the gross amount does not include any adjustments for credits, cash equivalents, discounts, fees, refunds, or cash back at purchases. Hence, the amount on the 1099-K may not represent your actual taxable amount. It is also possible the personal transactions could be included if you receive payment through your business account. As a best practice, you should have separate accounts for personal and business transactions.

While you have always been responsible for reporting and paying taxes on your income, this new law simply gives the IRS more comprehensive information to make sure you are accurately reporting taxable revenue. You can still offset the income reported on 1099-K with your deductible expenses, so be sure to have a proper recordkeeping system that clearly reflects your revenue and expenses. ■



Kimberly Zarett is a principal and **Jackie Zhang** is a senior accountant at Cover & Rossiter.



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How a Health Benefits Company is Also Benefiting Health

BY NICK MORIELLO



THE HEALTH BENEFITS BUSINESS is pretty straightforward despite it being part of a more complex system. At Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware, we work closely with our brokers, provider partners, State officials and other stakeholders, to meet the health coverage needs of Delaware employers of all sizes and individuals and their families. But beyond day-to-day efforts as a company, our commitment to the community has become a significant part of what we consider to be business as usual.

As we aim to deliver quality products that support a policyholder's

health, we also invest in programs, projects and organizations that help improve health for all. Whether it's through grants that provide transportation to doctors' appointments; or by collaborating with other businesses to guide economic development and build the health care workforce; or by participating in health and wellness events and statewide health initiatives, we want to help solve challenges outside the scope of our website 'About Us' section.

In 2021 we sponsored over 100 nonprofit partner events to show our support of not just health-related causes, but of the work all Delaware's

Health Care & Insurance

nonprofits are doing to better the community. We awarded over \$6 million in BluePrints for the Community grants and over \$2 million in other partner investments. Additionally, our team members organized several volunteer efforts and continued our United Way corporate campaign tradition. They also invest their own time and resources to dozens of organizations. And we move quickly to address unexpected health crises, such as providing COVID-19 relief—from business-based solutions to grant funding to PPE donations—and assisting those impacted by events such as Hurricane Ida.

There is much work still to be done but together with business and community partners, we can make real change.

Our company has also made significant contributions to support health care workforce development, recruitment, and retention. While we have long been involved with such efforts, 2021 presented several noteworthy opportunities. They included a \$1 million commitment to health care training in partnership with Delaware Technical Community College, \$1.5 million for Bayhealth's new General Medical Education residency program, as well as \$1 million to support the State of Delaware's Student Loan Repayment program.

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware recently released an impact report through the Delaware Community Foundation (DCF), detailing over a decade of community partnerships and investments from 2008 to 2020 through our BluePrints for the Community grant fund. Established in 2007, BluePrints for the Community granted more than \$16 million through 2020 and has committed over \$22 million to date. More than 200 community-based partners and nonprofits have received funding to address social determinants of

Reducing Health Disparities in Minority Communities



It's one thing to educate families about eating healthy, but it's another to ensure they have the resources to do it. We wouldn't be able to provide real, fresh food for these families if it wasn't for Highmark Delaware's support.

— Michael Minor, CBCDC Vice President of Operations

Urban Acres Produce

Organization:

Central Baptist Community Development Corporation

Grant: \$100,000 (2018-2019)

Central Baptist Community Development Corporation (CBCDC) members partnered with the Delaware Center for Horticulture and local farmers to harvest fruits and vegetables for Urban Acres Produce, an initiative to increase the year-round availability of fresh produce in underserved communities.

BluePrints made a huge difference not only in sustaining the program, but facilitating the adjustment of its service model to home delivery after COVID-19 began.

Urban Acres Produce set up about eight produce stands in low-income sections of the Eastside and Northeast five days a week and served more than 10,000 total customers. Now, more than 6,000 additional household members benefit from fresh produce deliveries.



Above, in partnership with the Delaware Community Foundation, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware released a lifetime impact report highlighting the investments of BluePrints for the Community from 2008 to 2020. Left, team members from Highmark Health Options coordinated a basic needs drive and volunteer event to help families affected by Hurricane Ida.

health, reduce health disparities in minority communities, increase access to health care for the uninsured and underserved, recruit and train health care professionals, and support early childhood and youth development and wellness.

There is much work still to be done but together with business and community partners, we can make real change. It is a privilege to serve our customers and communities and we will continue to make investments and leverage partnerships in 2022 to improve the health and well-being of Delawareans. ■



Nick Moriello is president of Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware.

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Getting Game Day Ready

NFL teams use exercises developed by ChristianaCare to protect football players from injuries

BY JENNIFER A. THOMAS, MBA, MS, CCC-SLP

AT CHRISTIANACARE REHABILITATION SERVICES, we are relentlessly curious, and we continuously look for ways to innovate.

In our quest to develop new ways to prevent injury, ChristianaCare physical therapists invented a new screening and injury prevention program that is so innovative that it's attracted the attention of multiple sports teams—including the Super Bowl Champion Los Angeles Rams, who used this unique regimen to keep their athletes healthy throughout last season.

The program involves using a screening tool called the “core sling

screen”. The screen tests the strength of trunk muscles, also known as core muscles, and is combined with a specialized exercise program to strengthen those muscles. Weakness in core muscles can lead to common athletic injuries such as strains in the abdomen, groin, quadriceps and lower back.

A study on the program's success was published last spring in the *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation*. Our physical therapists presented their research at the NFL's Professional Football Athletic Trainer Symposium,





while athletic trainers with the Los Angeles Rams and the Baltimore Ravens met with our physical therapists directly to learn how to use it to prevent their players from sustaining muscle injuries.

Brian Catania, MPT, SCS, ATC, and Travis Ross, PT, DPT, who developed the program at ChristianaCare Rehabilitation Services at Glasgow, began working on ways to increase resilience in core muscles nearly nine years ago. Through their research, they developed the core sling screen, which detects weakness in those muscles, and they reasoned that if they could identify ways to improve the strength of the core muscles, common lower extremity injuries would be less likely to occur.

It was a two-part approach—the development of a reliable screening tool to examine the core muscles, and the development of a targeted exercise program to strengthen those muscles.

A randomized-control study was performed to test out traditional exercises and compare them to a newly developed exercise program that involved rotational movements of the torso, known as rotary-based exercises. The study found that the rotary-based exercises increased the activation of targeted abdominal muscles and could make adjacent areas of the body, such as the groin, less injury-prone. The study included 31 female

and male students from the University of Delaware, and was conducted by ChristianaCare's departments of Rehabilitation Services and Sports Medicine.

Catania and Ross have provided further instruction to both the Rams and Ravens. In May of last year, they visited the Ravens' facility in Owings Mills, Md., to personally instruct Ravens athletic trainers and physical therapists on how to perform the treatment.

The treatment has also been presented at the National Athletic Trainers' Association and the Eastern Athletic Trainers Association annual conferences.

Strains are among the most common sports injuries, according to the U.S. National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases.

But you can be confident that if you or your employees need help to recover from a strain, or any other type of injury, they are making a wise choice by seeking out physical therapists at ChristianaCare Rehabilitation Services. It's the choice of champions! ■



Jennifer A. Thomas, MBA, MS, CCC-SLP, is the vice president of ChristianaCare Rehabilitation Services.

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Convenient Care Close to Home

Expanding access to quality care for the people
of Sussex County BY DAVID A. TAM, MD, MBA, CPHE, FACHE



STOP AND TAKE A GOOD LOOK AROUND. Beebe Healthcare is right here or around the corner from just about anywhere in Sussex County.

The health care system is rapidly expanding its presence across the county to meet the needs of the people we serve—families, friends, neighbors, and visitors. Our facility improvement project at the Margaret H. Rollins Lewes Campus is ongoing with updated cardiovascular labs and a redesigned main entrance being the first phase to reach completion, along with continued upgrading of patient rooms and our dining areas.

In summer 2020, we unveiled Beebe's South Coastal Health Campus near Millville. It houses a freestanding emergency department and serves as a second location for Beebe's comprehensive oncology program, where compassionate and convenient care is delivered close to home. That Health Campus complements outpatient services, including primary and specialty care, lab, imaging, physical rehabilitation, and walk-in care already located on Route 26 in Millville.

In late spring 2022, Beebe will open the doors to a new Specialty Surgical Hospital on its Rehoboth Health Campus, packed with the latest

We are taking the necessary steps now to assure we can continue making quality health care conveniently accessible for all.

innovations and technologies to streamline operative care for patients with a wide range of medical needs. The new hospital will offer orthopedic, bariatric, breast, and spine surgical services. It will feature four operating rooms, 20 bays for pre- and post-operative care, and 24 private, short-stay inpatient rooms. Additionally, the Rehoboth Walk-In Care Center will be relocating to this building.

Timing couldn't be better. Research shows that population growth in Sussex County will more than double national averages over the next five years. Surgical volumes are also expected to increase by a whopping 62 percent by 2025. When a patient learns they need to have surgery, in most cases, they want that procedure scheduled as quickly as possible. Additional space—dedicated exclusively to surgical care—is the key to making that possible, especially as the population grows and more people rely on Beebe for care. We are taking the necessary steps now to assure we can continue making quality health care conveniently accessible for all.

Construction of Beebe's new Specialty Surgical Hospital required a significant investment—over \$100 million. And the other new

construction projects have all been important financial commitments. Beebe Medical Foundation has played a critical role in our ability to bring our vision to fruition. We are incredibly grateful to our donors, sponsors, and other supporters, whose generous gifts allow Beebe to continue putting stakes in the ground across Sussex County.

At the heart of it all, Beebe is committed to providing quality and safe care and to create positive and impactful patient and family experiences. It's one reason why we engaged our Patient Family Advisory Council in making design decisions for the new surgical hospital. Former patients, donors, and other community members with a vested interest in our future helped us choose warm and welcoming colors, artwork, and amenities to make patients and visitors feel welcome and comfortable. We want the people in our community to have an experience you remember, and the excellence you expect, so we can earn your loyalty, and make Beebe your health care provider of choice for a lifetime—because Sussex County is our specialty. ■



David A. Tam, MD, MBA, CPHE, FACHE
is president and CEO of Beebe Healthcare.

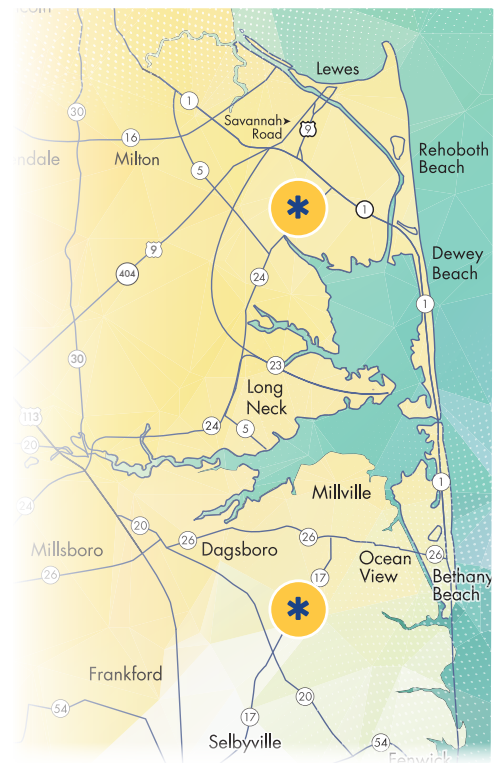
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Scan the code to learn about Beebe's comprehensive cancer care program.





Preventing Diabetes in the Workforce

A call to action for employers **BY JILL M. HUTT**

WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS CARE about preventing diabetes in the workforce? Health care spending for people with diabetes is 2.3 times greater than for those without diabetes.

Diabetes is a serious condition affecting over 37 million Americans—96 million adults in the U.S. have prediabetes, and 84 percent don't know they have it¹. Diabetes is devastating physically, emotionally, and financially, causing serious complications such as heart disease, kidney failure, and blindness. Diabetes can result in reduced productivity, absenteeism, unemployment from chronic disability, and premature mortality.

Among Delaware adults, 12 percent have diabetes, and an additional 9 percent have prediabetes—a condition where a person's blood sugar is high, but not high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes. Equally of concern, 37 percent of Delaware adults have obesity and 32 percent are overweight, conditions associated with prediabetes. Other risk factors include age greater than 45, family history of diabetes, and low physical activity levels. Annual diabetes and prediabetes costs in Delaware are \$1.1 billion².

Employers can address prediabetes in the workforce by offering the CDC-endorsed National Diabetes Prevention Lifestyle Change Program (National DPP)—proven to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. Participants learn to make healthy food choices, increase physical activity, and manage stress. These lifestyle changes can cut their risk

of developing type 2 diabetes by 58 percent (71 percent for those 60 or older). According to the CDC, outcomes have shown up to five-to-seven percent loss in body weight, reduced hypertension and improved cardiovascular health.

The National DPP is offered in-person or online and is covered by many health insurers. Even without insurance coverage the cost is economical—typically \$400-\$700 in a pay-for-performance program linked to key milestones for enrollment, completion, and weight loss. By offering the program, employers can realize a value on investment (VOI) in direct and indirect financial benefits. Many public and private employers reported success in offering the National DPP³.

In 2020, the City of Wilmington took action to address diabetes and

The Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health, in collaboration with the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, supports employers in promoting the National DPP to the workforce. Act now and learn more about this cost-saving program by visiting:
<https://youtu.be/NVRkJJZAlw>
<https://tinyurl.com/2ypcrr4n>
<https://tinyurl.com/3pk2d522>

“The National DPP lifestyle change program generates a high return on investment. Financially, the program is a no-brainer. However, if you think about infusing joy into the workforce, the return is even bigger.”

prediabetes in its workforce by implementing the National DPP with the YMCA of Delaware, which is covered by the City's health plan, Highmark. The program resulted in participants achieving an average five percent weight loss and a projected \$151,000 savings for the City. According to Dany Bourjolly Smith, employee benefits manager with the City of Wilmington, "The National DPP lifestyle change program generates a high return on investment. Financially, the program is a no-brainer. However, if you think about infusing joy into the workforce, the return is even bigger."

A program participant stated, "I cannot recommend this program highly enough. I lost 45 pounds and gave a testimonial to one of the classes. This program changed my life." ■

1. www.cdc.gov

2. *Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 2003-2020*

3. www.chronicdisease.org



Jill M. Hutt is vice president of member services at the Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health, which serves employers in southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and Delaware.



Employers working together can prevent diabetes and drive change!

The Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health seeks to increase the value of health benefit spending for the region's employers by improving workforce and community health, increasing healthcare quality and safety, and reducing healthcare costs. We represent employer interests to address population health priorities and to ensure that when healthcare is needed it is accessible, affordable, equitable, high-quality, and safe.

GPBCH serves employers in southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware, representing 1.5 million lives. We thank our Delaware employer members for their support of our mission: City of Wilmington, ChristianaCare, Delaware Statewide Benefits, University of Delaware and YMCA of Delaware.

To learn more visit www.gpbch.org, or contact Jill Hutt at jhutt@gpbch.org.

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Revolutionary Neurosurgery at Bayhealth

New 7D Surgical FLASH™ Navigation System and Globus ExcelsiusGPS® provide safer spinal and cranial procedures **BY DR. DAWN TARTAGLIONE**

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS and advancements in neurosurgery provide better patient outcomes and peace of mind for both the patient and surgeon. Bayhealth neurosurgeons, Dawn Tartaglione, DO, FACOS and Amit Goyal, MD, are leading the charge in bringing advanced technology, procedures, and state-of-the-art care to Delaware residents.

Bayhealth is the first and only health system in Delaware to utilize the 7D Surgical FLASH™ Navigation System, a high-tech tool that provides a better way to navigate delicate spine and brain surgeries while also making surgery safer for staff and patients.

Unlike standard X-ray images that may be taken several times to guide the surgeon during a procedure—leading to more time in surgery and more radiation exposure—7D Surgical FLASH™ produces detailed

two- and three-dimensional images in three-to-four seconds using sophisticated technology like that found in a self-driving car.

This results in shortened surgeries with less time under anesthesia; shorter Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and hospital stays, smaller incisions; and highly accurate placement of screws, rods, and other surgical hardware or devices.

In 2019, Bayhealth was also first in the state to implement the use of the ExcelsiusGPS® robotic guidance and navigation system for spine surgery. Surgery with this system offers many potential benefits for patients, such as smaller incisions, less scarring, a shorter hospital stay, and faster recovery. It works like a car's GPS, aligning the surgeons on their planned surgical pathways for precise placement of screws and

other implants in delicate areas close to nerves and the spinal cord.

Bayhealth Director of Neurosurgery Dawn Tartaglione, DO, FACOS sat down for a Q&A session to explain how these revolutionary technologies provide better outcomes for patients and staff.

How do these technologies provide safer outcomes?

The 7D Surgical FLASH™ Navigation System allows us to see inside a patient's body in three dimensions so that we can plan brain and spine procedures very efficiently. The plan for the procedure can be done quickly and the "flash" allows us to update the plan as the surgery progresses.

Before these technologies were available, real-time X-Rays were taken frequently when placing stabilization devices into a patient's spine. Now, the robotic arm of the Globus ExcelsiusGPS® can be guided by a footplate and sterile touchscreen used by the surgeon, and minimal X-Rays are taken. This decreases the length of the operation and time the patient is lying face down under general anesthesia during back surgery, which in turn, provides safer procedures.

Is the ExcelsiusGPS® robot considered non-invasive?

Patients are often concerned about having a robot inside their body. This robot is not like the DaVinci robot, which operates inside the body guided by the surgeon.

This new navigation tool has a robotic arm that holds itself perfectly still in the exact location that we need to place the hardware, outside the body, from 1 to 12 inches above the skin.

What are the benefits to using these technologies for elective spine surgery?

We are offering a superior level of care right here. That means our patients don't have to travel to receive the latest procedures and to get the pre- and post-op help they need. With aging patients staying more active than ever before, they need their spines to function at a higher level for many years to come. Both technological systems we offer can shorten surgery and recovery time. This allows patients to return to their daily activities sooner and leads to happier outcomes.

Visit bayhealth.org/services/neurosciences/neurological-procedures-surgeries to learn more about neurological treatments. ■



Dawn Tartaglione, DO, FACOS,
is Bayhealth's medical director of
neurosurgery.

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In the Business of Making Memories

Wilmington Blue Rocks celebrates 30 years

BY PETER OSBORNE | PHOTOS BY NICK WALLACE PHOTOGRAPHY

WHEN WILMINGTON BLUE ROCKS OWNER Dave Heller is asked to define success for the upcoming 30th anniversary season, he answers with a metric you won't see on many performance dashboards.

"Smiles."

Of course, Heller would like to see higher average attendance, but he keeps returning to that smiles metric.

"I look for short lines at the concession stands because people want to get their food and go enjoy the game. Nobody enjoys waiting in line, so when we have short lines that leads to smiles. When people bite into the food and their eyes kind of light up or they're laughing at in-game entertainment, that makes me happy."

Coming Home

Heller grew up in Baltimore, so when the Wilmington franchise came on the market in 2014, he decided "it was as close as I'm ever going to get to owning a team in my hometown because I'm never going to be able to afford the Orioles."

But proximity was not the only driving factor.

"My first team was in Columbus, Georgia, and we learned a good lesson: Don't buy a team unless you know that you're going to enjoy and appreciate the market that it plays in, because you can change a ballpark, but you can't change a market," he says.

"The entire trajectory of the Riverfront was really exciting to me and remains to this day very exciting. It is markedly different than it was when I bought the club. We've got new hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues that have popped up over the past seven years. And it continues to get bigger and better every year."

And then there's Mr. Celery.

Heller and co-owner Clark Minker own a High-A franchise that consistently ranks among the league leaders in attendance and sponsorships. Under their leadership, Frawley Stadium was voted best ballpark in Advanced-A baseball in 2016, and in 2015 won Ballpark Digest's award for Best New Food Item (the Sweeney Dog, a hot dog covered in bacon and raspberry jelly, served in a glazed doughnut).

Heller also owns the Quad Cities (Iowa) River Bandits and Billings (Montana) Mustangs minor-league franchises. His Main Street Baseball group has received multiple honors, including Minor League Baseball Organization of the Year in Quad Cities from Ballpark Digest.

But he didn't have Mr. Celery before he arrived in Wilmington.

Director of Community Affairs Kevin Linton has been with the team full-time since 2001 and spent some time here with the club in 1999. He says there had always been talk about what the team should do when it scored a run.

"Somebody back in 2000 found this green costume that looked like a crumpled-up piece of celery, and somebody else threw it on. When we scored a run, Mr. Celery ran out there. And the fans started to really get behind it, then we added the Woo Hoo song (Song 2 by Blur), and then some UD students started to wear green and bring celery stalks from the grocery store."

Linton says the popularity of Mr. Celery has grown from that simple beginning: "We opened a brand-new window of merchandise, and for



Cover Story

years we had a wall devoted to Mr. Celery in the Quarry Team Store. It opened the door to sell green t-shirts in a Blue Rocks team store. We now devote a day every year to a Celerybration.”

Making Memories

Heller says that he thought, “Well, this will be fun,” when we bought the team. We’ll expand our interest in the baseball business. What I’ve come to learn, especially in Wilmington, is that we’re not in the baseball business. We’re not in the entertainment business. We’re in the memory-making business, particularly for young children. That’s why our fans come to see us.”

Given his focus on making memories, you can’t avoid asking Heller about his fondest Blue Rocks memory.

“Winning the championship in 2019 with the Kansas City Royals was really something special,” he says. “The Royals are such a first-class organization in every way. Winning a championship in Wilmington gave me a tremendous amount of joy, not just for them but for the people of Wilmington as well.”



Members of the Blue Rocks staff celebrate 30 years in business.

General Manager Vince Bulik, who arrived in January 2021, enjoys sitting with long-time season ticket holders and seasonal staff who have been here for many of the 30 years. He also runs into some who were around between 1940 and 1952 when Bob Carpenter founded the original Blue Rocks with Connie Mack as a Class B Interstate League affiliate of Mack’s Philadelphia A’s.

There are memories, and then there are accomplishments. Asked to make that differentiation, Heller doesn’t pause.

“Our biggest accomplishment would certainly be avoiding contraction when [43] teams were being wiped out” by Major League Baseball’s 2021 effort to modernize facilities, improve working conditions, and create better geographic alignment. In this region alone, franchises were eliminated in Trenton, New Jersey; Frederick and Hagerstown, Maryland; and Williamsport and State College, Pennsylvania.

“We avoided that here because of the ballpark improvements, the relationships that we had built within baseball, and the strong support that we’ve received from state officials and the governor.”

But you have to be playing baseball to make memories, and the team is still emerging from a long, dark pandemic-related tunnel.

“We went 20 months—from September 2019 to May 2021—without any revenue and no federal assistance or state subsidies,” Heller says. “It’s been a real challenge, to be sure. Congress appropriated relief for shuttered venues and restaurants, but minor league baseball doesn’t qualify.”

“I want to get back to where people can see all the activity behind home plate and by the dugouts because COVID has pretty much pushed most of that stuff down the lines in 2021,” Bulik says. “The most important part is the safety of the fans, the safety of the players, the safety of my staff. We want people to walk away feeling that they were able to come to a game, enjoyed it, felt comfortable, and are going to come back.”

A Vision for the Future

Heller’s three-phase vision for the Blue Rocks in Wilmington starts with completing the upgrade of the facilities to meet the new MLB standards that came with the Minor League Baseball reorganization. The team completed about two-thirds of the renovations, including larger clubhouses and dressing rooms for female coaches and umpires, moving the bullpens behind the outfield wall, and installing new lighting.

Heller hopes to negotiate a new lease this summer that will enable him to obtain the land to move forward with the next two phases: building a park within a park for kids and residential development nearby.

For the 35th anniversary celebration in 2027, Heller sees the Blue Rocks “playing in a ballpark that meets all the MLB standards. You look out into left field, and you’re seeing a rollercoaster whipping around and kids with their hands in the air, screaming and cheering as that coaster’s going around. And half a dozen other rides there for kids to enjoy. And there’s a new apartment building out behind right field with balconies overlooking the field. And we have this 360-degree concourse with all these neat little ‘neighborhoods’ throughout different parts of the park.”

Today’s focus is on building—and re-energizing—relationships with businesses and the community and dealing with any COVID-related restrictions.

Heller says the team’s ask is, “Just give us one day. Bring your team, your group, your employees, your family, or high school reunion out to Frawley Stadium and we’ll show you a great time.”

“We try to add something different and create a little bit of freshness every year,” Bulik adds. “We always change up menus. This year, we’re adding a group cap component for every group of 20 or more to celebrate our 30th anniversary.”

Linton says ticket sales and interest will get a boost from the teams visiting Wilmington, each of whom have regional appeal.

“We are the Washington Nationals, but we play the [High-A affiliates] for the Philadelphia Phillies, Baltimore Orioles, New York Mets, and New York Yankees in our division alone. I think fans will be excited to see these teams, even if they’re not fans of the Nationals or Blue Rocks.

Success in 2022 is all about a return to normalcy.

"I would love to see more fans in the ballpark jumping up and down," says Bulik, whose stops before Wilmington include Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, Lancaster, York, and Aberdeen with Cal Ripken Jr. "It's about putting more smiles on people's faces and getting into the community much more than we have in the last couple years because of COVID. I haven't seen that in three years, and I just want that back."

"If I gave you the keys to the stadium, what would you do?"

The Blue Rocks' successful approach to community relations over the years involves team staff and young players in community outreach, including hospital visits, camps and clinics, and school reading programs and recognition events for citizenship and perfect attendance.

Those efforts were put on hold with the arrival of COVID, and while the team dipped its toe back into the water in 2020 and 2021, it hopes to fully re-energize them this year.

The Blue Rocks have historically seen high renewal rates with corporate partners, and a few helped them through the rough times.

"Bank of America underwrote a movie series that helped keep us alive during the summer of 2020," says Linton. "In 2021, Chase underwrote a

great program from July to the end of the season that enabled us to give tickets to first responders and some of the labor workers in the grocery outlets."

Bulik says salespeople avoid just selling a piece of inventory like that last outfield fence sign or a program ad.

"You have to listen and sit down and read the room—what photos are on the wall, what they highlight in their reception room, what awards they've won for working with nonprofits—and

figure out what meets their needs and touches their hearts," he said.

But let's end where we started with the owner answering the question about what makes him smile at a Blue Rocks game?

"The pizza," Heller says with a laugh. "I think the pizza at our ballpark is some of the best pizza I've ever had anywhere. And for whatever reason—and I've tried—we've never been able to replicate the taste of that pizza in any of our other parks. Even my 11-year-old son loves going to Wilmington with me because he knows. He also thinks we have the best pizza." ■



DSCC President Mike Quaranta discusses development plans with Blue Rocks General Manager Vince Bulik.

Blue Rocks by the Numbers (1993-2001)

2 No-hitters (Jonathan Bowlan in 2019 and Brian Sanches in 2000)

3 Major League Affiliations Kansas City Royals (1993-2004, 2007-2020), Boston Red Sox (2005-2006), Washington Nationals (2021-Present)

3 Retired Numbers 18-Johnny Damon, 33-Mike Sweeney, 36-Robin Roberts (Original Blue Rocks from 1940-52), and 42-Jackie Robinson (retired throughout baseball)

5 League Titles (1994, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2019)

10 Northern Division Titles (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2015, 2019)

200 Blue Rocks have gone on to the major leagues, including notable All-Stars Carlos Beltran, Lance Carter, Johnny Damon, Mike Sweeney, Zack Greinke, Jon Lieber, Jose Rosado, Mike Moustakas, Eric Hosmer, and Salvador Perez

1,800 pounds of chalk for the foul lines/batter's box during the 2021 season

4,000 pounds of clay for the pitcher's mound and home-plate area during the 2021 season

13,000+ hot dogs sold during the 2021 season

14,000+ orders of French fries sold during the 2021 season

16,000+ slices of Grotto Pizza sold during the 2021 season

8,286,689 THE BIG NUMBER

Total attendance over the past 30 years at Blue Rocks games



A former business journalist, **Peter Osborne** leads Friction Free Communications, which helps organizations and individuals crystallize their brand stories; create helpful, engaging content for targeted audiences; and attract and retain customer relationships.



The State of the Delaware Multifamily Industry

A snapshot of operations, investments, and legislation

BY KEVIN M. WOLFGANG

Operational Overview

Like most industries, COVID-19 has had a significant impact, including staffing/vendor issues, supply chain disruptions, and challenging regulatory mandates (such as eviction moratoriums). However, the worst fears of the industry have not come to fruition. This is primarily a result of a massive amount of federal money provided to states for rental assistance to those at or below 80 percent of their county's area median income that incurred financial hardship because of the pandemic and were in danger of losing their homes.

The money is distributed through the Delaware Housing Assistance Program (DEHAP), administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA). Although the administration of the program has had significant “bumps in the road”, DSHA deserves credit for essentially developing this program overnight and negotiating the myriad of challenges that come with administering a program of this magnitude.

The rental assistance funds delivered through this program have been a critical lifeline for tenants and landlords as the industry navigates the pandemic. Through the past 24 months, tenants remained in their apartment homes at record levels, resulting in extremely low tenant turn-over and high occupancy levels. This underscores the reality that Delaware needs more affordable rental housing options and that direct financial rental assistance for tenants is the most efficient way to limit evictions. However, there is concern that the end of DEHAP funding and pent-up turnover demand will result in a significant operational downturn in the future.

Investment Overview

The multifamily industry continues to be extremely attractive to investors who view real estate as a stable and safe place to be in an inflationary and low-rate environment. Nationally, private equity investors now have a total of

\$287.8 billion to invest in commercial real estate, up both an 11 percent from a year ago and a massive 57 percent compared to the end of 2019—according to Bloomberg, citing Preqin data.

In Delaware specifically, there has been an influx of investment interest from out-of-state investors who are fleeing primary markets because of unfavorable regulatory environments (such as rent control), unfavorable tax policies, and political momentum that places the operational success of the industry at risk. Investors view Delaware as geographically attractive and business friendly with a manageable regulatory environment (although this is in jeopardy—see next section). Although interest rates are trending upward, lenders—including Fannie/Freddie/HUD, life companies, and local banks—remain bullish on most residential real estate and a favorable lending environment persists. This has all resulted in compressed cap rates and record-level pricing on sales with continued robust sales volume.

Legislative Overview

There is a multitude of proposed or pending legislation before Delaware's General Assembly that would have a sweeping impact on the multifamily industry. Just a sample of such current legislation includes:

- SB 101, which creates a mandatory right to counsel—at no cost to the tenant and funded by taxpayers and/or multifamily industry—and provides attorneys to tenants in all landlord-tenant cases (provided they are under the income threshold), regardless of the merits of their case.
- SB 90 would require all apartment communities to be forced to accept Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV's) such as Section-8 and all other subsidized programs into their rental communities, even if the property owner has never participated in any HCV program.
- HB 235 makes someone's housing status a protected class and would likely limit or eliminate the landlord's ability to utilize previous rental references and rental history in the applicant screening process.

The Delaware Apartment Association (DAA) supports the goals and social initiatives these bills seek to realize, however the DAA strongly disagrees with the terms and conditions of the specific bills as presented and has advocated for more efficient pathways to achieve such goals. These drafted bills (and others) will be extremely detrimental to the economic health of the industry, both immediately and in the long term. Some legislators have failed to fully comprehend the negative effects of these bills to the taxpayers, the industry, and to the tenants. Furthermore, these bills will also negatively impact the availability of "affordable" housing in Delaware, which is already lacking, and will limit reinvestment into an aging rental housing stock in Delaware. ■

Any and all opinions contained in the above article are those of the author. They are not reflective of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce's official position on the bills referenced in this article.



Kevin M. Wolfgang is president and chief executive officer of Evergreen Apartment Group.

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Ready in Six is on the Horizon

BY REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM G. BUSH IV

WHEN A COMPANY MAKES THE CHOICE to move to Delaware or grow its footprint in our state, our whole economic ecosystem stands to benefit. One business' decision can create a wealth of new job opportunities, help revitalize a town or community, create new markets for goods and services, and add stability to our tax base.

But our state has a major liability that is causing some site selectors, investors, and small businesses to think twice before making the decision to move or expand here. In some cases, it could take up to two years to complete the permitting processes required for a medium- or large-scale project and finally get a shovel in the ground. This inefficiency is costing us.

It is estimated that even a six-month delay in the permitting process for certain projects can result in the loss of millions of dollars in potential wages for hardworking Delawareans. Site selectors have told me, my fellow state legislators, and Governor John Carney's administration in no

uncertain terms that our permitting process must be cut down if Delaware wants to remain competitive.

As a small business owner, a member of the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, and chair of the House Economic Development Committee, I understand the value of a strong private-public partnership and our state's role in supporting a healthy business environment. During my first meeting with Governor Carney after being elected, I stated one of my priorities was to expedite the permitting process and improve economic development. I have been engaging with stakeholders and working on legislative measures since that time.

One major opportunity for reform we've identified is within our Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) process, which reviews all major land use projects before they are sent to local governments. The PLUS process has plenty of benefits when it comes to smart planning and coordination

among government agencies, but sometimes it can hold up big projects coming to the state. I'm working on legislation that would expedite that process, while retaining the core value of PLUS.

I'm also working with DelDOT to expedite the issuance of temporary entrance permits for economic development projects. These entrance permits allow a developer to start work on their site faster and complete their project in less time. We need to let developers start moving dirt, at their risk, while waiting for unattached approvals.

The creation of an economic development liaison within state government to ensure development projects are not being delayed and are proceeding forward in an efficient and expedited manner is essential to improving our timelines for projects. This person will help strengthen interagency communication, streamline the permitting process, and assist in eliminating delays. Part of the liaison's role should be to develop an online tracking system for projects.

Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs) improve the development process. They provide predictability and certainty for site selectors and businesses. We need to look no further than the success of Middletown and its use of a TID. With the size of our state, we should be able to create a statewide district. Assistance in creating TID's is part of the improvements we are setting forth.

Finally, there are reviews and processes within state government that can be streamlined. Multiple reviews and approvals of a singular element

is not needed and delays the permitting process. We have tried to identify inefficiencies and eliminate them in legislation that will be proposed.

After years of talks, collaboration, and forging new partnerships, the pieces are finally coming into place. Taken together, these measures will allow us to move closer to our shared priorities and goal of continuous improvement. The release of legislation and implementation of new administrative policies is on the horizon for this legislative session.

As our economy continues to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic, Delawareans are looking to the future, and we need to ensure that future includes good-paying jobs, vibrant towns and cities, and a strong pattern of economic growth. Governor Carney has made many internal changes within State agencies to expedite the process. However, it is time to take it to the next level so we can attract more businesses that provide great jobs and help us have an even stronger and more robust economy.

Reducing our permitting process timeline significantly isn't going to happen overnight, but I'm encouraged by the direction we're heading and I'm looking forward to continuing this important work. ■



Representative William G. Bush IV
represents the 29th House District.

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IT HAS BECOME PAINFULLY OBVIOUS that the world has more diverse needs than colleges are intended to meet and the opportunities to have a fulfilling, exciting, and diverse career are many and varied. We are proud to say a career in construction is one of the smartest and most rewarding career choices a person can make.

For those interested in a profession in construction, they should know they will start making a good income on day one, avoiding student loan debt. Over the course of their career, one can be in the field, an office, working as part of a team, or supervising. They can work for someone else or run their own business. There is so much the construction industry has to offer and everyone with an interest are welcomed and needed.

Associated Builders and Contractors, Delaware Chapter (ABC) and the Delaware Contractors Association (DCA), Delaware Chapter of Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) are associations of commercial and industrial contractors in an industry that is the lifeblood of Delaware's economy and has driven economic growth in the state and nationally over the years. The industry provides a direct pathway to personal prosperity and the ability to earn a high-quality living without the burden of excessive college debt.

Nationally the average age of a construction worker is 47. For every five people leaving the industry, only one is entering. At this rate, and over the next three years, the shortage of new workers could stall Delaware's economic growth that is now restarting.

As an improving economy—supported by a renewed focus on thoughtful economic development—creates new opportunities in Delaware, the need for vocationally trained and certified, skilled workers becomes even more important.

Let's take a closer look at the opportunities that are available to new workers entering the industry. It is important to note that the numbers shown below are average annual salaries and do not include overtime, company incentives, or benefits:

- Boilermakers \$58,856
- Electrician \$57,741
- HVAC \$42,026
- Plumber \$51,830
- Carpenters \$54,157
- Heavy Equipment Operator \$61,091
- Pipefitter \$59,558

All these opportunities and more are available to Delawareans whether just entering the workforce or making a career change who are willing to make a commitment to the industry. This is truly a pathway to a good life and the opportunity to begin a career without the burden of excessive college debt.

A quick look at industry statistics—updated quarterly—shows that in Delaware alone there are over 15,000 positions awaiting workers representing more than 20 trades. The Delaware Department of Labor identified our industry as the third fastest growing job growth industry over the next five years.

ABC, DCA, and our members are committed to developing the construction workforce of tomorrow. And remember, construction is one of the few industries where the vast majority of the work must be performed on-site and cannot be offshored. So, as your student, friend, or family member explores careers that interest them, let them know that through a career in construction, they can make a good living while performing interesting and valuable work. They won't be disappointed. ■



Edward J. Capodanno is president of Associated Builders and Contractors.



Bryon Short is executive director of the Delaware Contractors Association.

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Creating Opportunities and Fulfilling Promises of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

BY KATHY STOEBERL AND JENNY DU PONT

AS THE COUNTRY STRUGGLES with an ongoing labor shortage, there is an entire population of working-age adults who want jobs but struggle to find opportunities suitable for their talents and abilities. As a general rule, both in Delaware and across the country, individuals who are blind or visually impaired or have other disabilities tend to be under-represented in the workplace.

Delaware is home to more than 19,200 blind or visually impaired adults among a total of 124,000 adults with disabilities. Only approximately

one-quarter of Delawareans who are disabled are employed, and their median annual income is just under \$27,000, which is \$11,000 less than the median income for non-disabled adults. Too often, members of the disabled community are defined by their perceived limitations rather than their very real capabilities.

This does not have to be the case. As of last summer, Delaware—long a champion of workforce development and job creation—has a new kid on the block focused on bringing training, opportunities, and jobs to this under-

employed cohort. In 2021, two respected nonprofit organizations serving those who are blind and visually impaired—The Chicago Lighthouse of Illinois and BlindSight Delaware of Wilmington—joined forces to create a new joint venture called BlindSight Delaware Enterprises, Inc. (BSDE).

BSDE's mission is to provide jobs and enhance workplace development for the blind, visually impaired, disabled, and veteran population of Delaware. The inspiration for BSDE's business plan comes from The Chicago Lighthouse, which has over the past decade established and run successful call centers that employ blind, visually impaired, and disabled individuals. Not only do The Lighthouse's call centers provide training and full-time jobs for this traditionally underserved population but the revenue generated helps fund many services and other training programs for the blind and visually impaired throughout the State of Illinois.

The story behind the creation of BSDE is a simple but powerful one. BlindSight Delaware, a nonprofit organization that has provided services to the blind and visually impaired population of Delaware for more than 70 years, was impressed by the Chicago Lighthouse's strong track record in workforce development and job creation. BlindSight Delaware reached out to The Chicago Lighthouse in 2020 to see whether the two organizations might collaborate to replicate the same social service enterprise model in Delaware—and thus, a partnership was born.

BSDE is the ground-breaking result of this collaboration and already the nascent organization is having an impact in Delaware. Operating out of the BlindSight Delaware offices on Newport Gap Pike, BSDE is providing critical workforce training and hiring candidates for call center jobs for blind, visually impaired, disabled, and veteran Delawareans. BSDE currently employs nearly a dozen Delawareans who are working in specialized call centers serving two different health care systems and continues to grow its training and employment services.

BSDE is poised for growth and hopes to expand its operations significantly in the future. BSDE is currently focusing on providing call center solutions for health care and banking clients in Delaware and is eager to make connections and establish relationships in the broader Delaware business community to identify even more opportunities for serving the business community's call center needs. And while establishing call centers that train and employ its mission population is BSDE's current business plan and goal, BSDE's leadership—including its board of directors—hopes to pursue other

opportunities down the road, including training and job opportunities in digital accessible technologies training and light manufacturing, both of which have been successful at The Chicago Lighthouse.

In 2022, good business means more than caring about just the bottom line. Good business entails investing in communities to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to live fulfilling, purposeful lives. BSDE and its leadership hope that the Delaware business community will embrace this view and see the value of tapping into an underserved and underrepresented labor pool. BSDE's social enterprise model, with its dual purpose of creating jobs for this population and generating revenues to fund social service programs that help individuals from those vulnerable communities live independently and with confidence. The enterprise has the potential to have a transformative impact on Delaware and its citizens, and to create truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforces. ■



Jenny du Pont is the chair of the BSDE, Inc. Board of Directors.




Kathy Stoeberl is the executive vice president and chief business development officer for The Chicago Lighthouse.

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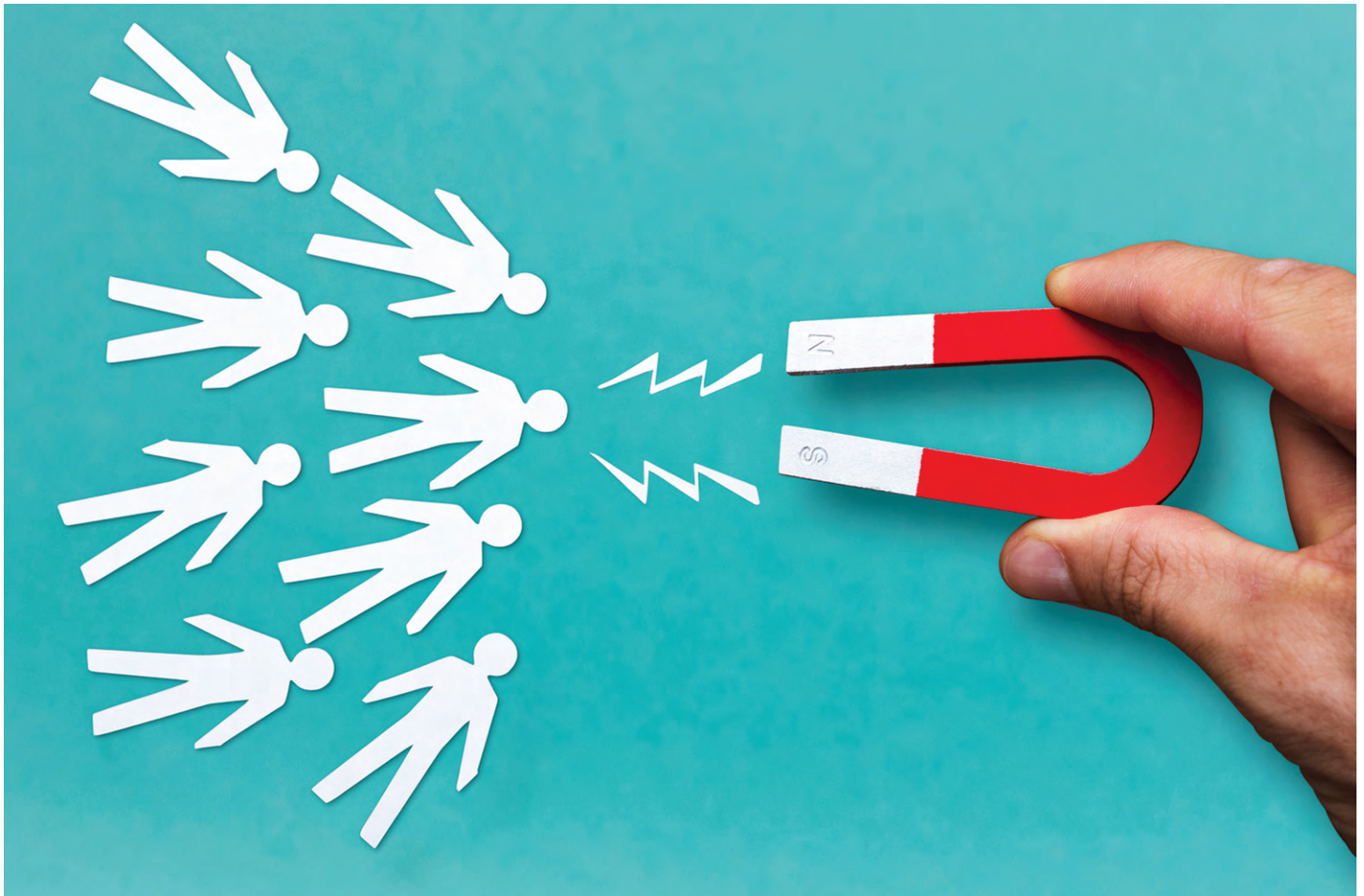
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“Please Don’t Leave!”

A guide to retaining and recruiting employees
during the Great Resignation **BY CHRISTINE WATSON**

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN LATELY about the Great Resignation. Employees are leaving their jobs in record numbers, and this is creating stress for businesses, both small and large. In many cases, this phenomenon is really a great reshuffling. Many employees are not leaving the workforce, but rather they are taking this opportunity to change careers or change their work environment.

Understanding the needs of employees is critical for any organization. Blackwell HR Solutions recently worked with a client, a small public relations firm, that wanted a better understanding of how their employees really felt about the work environment and culture. To obtain candid feedback, they engaged with Blackwell HR Solutions to conduct “stay interviews” with their team and used this feedback to develop a strategic approach to provide the work culture and benefits their employees truly valued. Companies should consider how conducting a “stay interview” now may prevent having to conduct an “exit interview” later.

While business owners and leaders may not be able to control all causes of employee departures, they should consider evaluating their company’s compensation and benefits philosophy. Compensation benchmarking is a great exercise to assess the competitiveness of your compensation and benefits offerings and can provide you with the confidence to make informed decisions.

Another Blackwell HR Solutions client—who eliminated their pre-pandemic employee wellness benefit of in-person workout classes—conducted an employee benefit survey. After reviewing the results, they elected to offer all employees NOOM subscriptions and wellness webinars with a licensed counselor to provide mental health tools to help manage the pandemic-fueled stress.

If budget constraints exist, take comfort in knowing that the number one indicator of job satisfaction remains an employee’s relationship with their direct supervisor. Business leaders can show their employees genuine

If budget constraints exist, take comfort in knowing that the number one indicator of job satisfaction remains an employee's relationship with their direct supervisor.

appreciation and encourage their leadership team to do the same through a variety of creative and inexpensive ways. For managers who need assistance in this area, coaching sessions provide additional support and guidance to improve leadership soft skills.

Rethinking Talent Acquisition

The pandemic has profoundly changed how, and where, people work. While this presented some challenges in employee retention, it also expanded the candidate pool. Employers can use this opportunity to evaluate where their jobs need to be located and expand their search parameters for new talent.

Question assumptions around open positions. For instance, can the job be performed by one person full-time, or could the responsibilities be performed by two part-time employees? More employers have turned to the digital talent marketplace to find qualified candidates. Talent communities, such as The Mom Project, connect accomplished professionals with employers seeking to build diverse workforces.

Additionally, employers should review their employee value proposition

to ensure competitiveness in the market. Some employees may value a flexible work schedule or more paid time off. Others may seek wellness benefits, like gym memberships and food vouchers.

Challenges vs. Opportunities

It is often said that challenges are just hidden opportunities. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, businesses who earnestly address the needs of their current workforce, while creatively assessing their needs for new talent, will successfully capitalize on the opportunity that can be found within this Great Resignation. ■



Christine Watson is senior HR principal at Blackwell HR Solutions, which offers a diverse array of human resources services to meet the evolving needs of nonprofit and for-profit client partners throughout Delaware and the Mid-Atlantic region.



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The Workforce Shift

How employee benefits can keep your business competitive and attractive during the workforce shift **BY CHERI WHEELER**

ACCORDING TO GALLUP, 48 percent of American workers are looking for new jobs.

Why Are They Leaving?

Older workers want more pay and younger workers want more work-life balance. The pandemic allowed people to evaluate their priorities, and nearly everyone wants more flexibility. Prudential's Pulse of the American Worker notes that when workers consider a new job, stability, work-life balance, pay, comprehensive benefits, and advancement opportunities are critical.



Expansion of Non-Health Care Offerings

In addition to traditional benefits like health care and retirement plans, employees are looking for wellness benefits, more child and elder support, additional paid time off to care for family, and help to offset the rising cost of health care.

Nearly eight in ten workers (77 percent) want their employers to focus on providing benefits central to their financial well-being. Additionally, research shows the workforce's newest generation wants work-life balance and is looking to their employer for mental health support as well as financial health programs.

Previously, financial health benefits were a nice-to-have option. However, it's quickly become part of must-have employee benefits that include resources for financial coaching, emergency savings, debt management, student loan repayment programs, and other financial tools.

Cut Through the Clutter with Customized Benefits

Individualized benefits can often have the most significant effect on people's lives. Business leaders need to understand the makeup of their workforce to create a strategic voluntary benefits package. Offerings to consider include:

Supplemental Health Benefits: Accident, critical illness, and hospital indemnity plans are gaining popularity as employees take on greater financial responsibility.

Identity Theft Protection: Identity theft continues to be a concern. This affordable benefit can include friends and family and gives employees an additional sense of security.

Student Loan Repayment: 71 percent of new grads have student loan

debt. Set up a tax-free benefit with student loan repayment programs. Even a monthly \$50 contribution sets your business apart!

Tuition Assistance: Many employers launched new tuition assistance programs over the last year. This corporate tax benefit shows employers' commitment to job growth and improves engagement and retention.

Pet Insurance: Pet adoption has increased; this benefit shows you care about your employees.

Mental Health Wellness: To support mental health, employers should consider these six resources:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
- Telemedicine with a behavioral health component
- Mental health apps
- All-in-one mental health point solutions
- Specialized resources (wellness, medical)
- Partnering with support groups

American workers rely on their employers to provide core benefits like health, dental, and vision insurance, but that is no longer enough in today's environment. Updating your benefits package is essential in attracting and retaining employees, especially when workers look to change their jobs. And don't forget, access to benefits doesn't matter unless you have a robust employee-centric communication plan. ■



Cheri Wheeler is vice president and senior consultant at Kelly Benefits Strategies.

THE GREAT RESIGNATION



BENEFIT OFFERINGS COULD INCLUDE



Supplemental Health Benefits:

Accident, critical illness, and hospital indemnity plans are gaining popularity.



Identity Theft Protection: Identity theft continues to be a concern. This affordable benefit can include friends and family and gives employees an additional sense of security.



Pet Insurance: Pet adoption soared during the pandemic; this benefit shows you care about your employees.

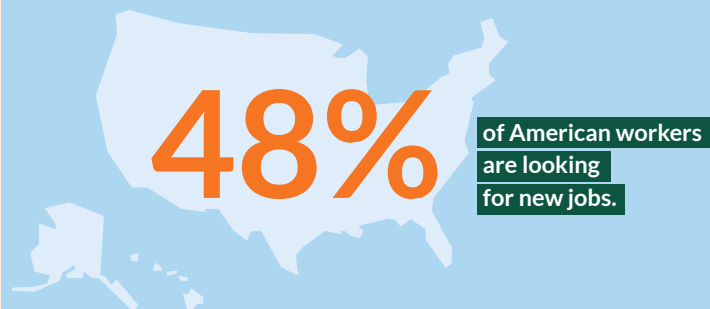


Student Loan Repayment & Tuition Assistance: 71% of new grads have student loan debt. Set up a student loan repayment program. Even a monthly \$50 contribution sets your business apart!



Mental Health Support: Employees need mental health support as they navigate the stress of work and life.

WHY ARE THEY LEAVING?



Planning for Our People

George & Lynch, Inc. expands ownership of firm as
one method to address workforce development **BY CHRIS BAKER**



AS THE PRESIDENT AND CEO of George & Lynch, Inc., one of my favorite events each year is gathering for our Quarter Century Club. Current employees, retirees, and even a few who are working elsewhere, come together for a luncheon and visit with their colleagues. There are usually pictures and stories and I reflect on experiences shared with each attendee. Since I've been with this company for over 30 years, those relationships vary. Some were my teachers, or even mentors. Some were my peers and remain good friends. And some I have had the honor to look after as supervisor or company executive.

A form of this tradition is undoubtedly repeated at countless other firms around the world. I recall my father as an employee of DuPont in the 1980s. When he reached the 25-year milestone, it was a big deal. The family photo that was part of the standard package still hangs in my mother's home. Nearly 40 years later, how much of that culture has changed? Even in the early 90s when I was a 'youngster' in the workforce, I recall hearing that the average person held at least ten jobs in their career. I cannot reach that number even if I count selling Christmas trees or watermelons starting from before my middle school days. However, I can count more positions held with this one employer—unskilled laborer included.

The previous paragraphs are background for the focus of this article, but enough about me. Our contracting company has been blessed with skilled, motivated, and loyal employees for generations. Like most firms, we have seen a shift to more transient career paths over the past decade or more. We have an aging workforce—as is common in the construction industry—and our industry is seeing less interest from young talent.

To address those concerns, workforce development has been a pursuit of various organizations, including ABC Delaware. We are planning more formal instruction to supplement on-the-job training that has worked well since our business was formed nearly 100 years ago. But we were not

prepared for the Great Resignation that has impacted us and many others. Child care, healthy retirement plans, and a red-hot job market could all be reasons for a higher than normal turnover rate. Even more concerning is the anticipation of more work than the availability of personnel.

One way we are addressing both retention of existing staff and recruitment of new employees (RnR), is a recently executed ESOP. An Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) provides opportunities for ownership to all employees. Plans can come in various shapes and sizes, certainly too much to discuss here, and you will want to engage an expert to facilitate the process. An ESOP is a qualified retirement plan, similar in some ways to a 401(k). We are keeping our 401(k) plan in place but with the ESOP as an added benefit for employees. Since tenure is a component of our plan, an individual will benefit even more the longer they remain with the company. Not only will it bolster retirement savings, but we are confident it will lead to greater engagement and satisfaction of our members.

You might imagine there are other reasons we pursued an ESOP at George & Lynch, Inc. Honestly, RnR did not initially top the list, though we were mindful of rewarding our employees' contributions to our success. Now nearly two years since the first ESOP notion—in parallel with COVID-influenced staffing—we believe RnR will differentiate us from competitors and attract employees that want to be part of our culture, today and in the years to come. ■



Chris Baker is president and chief executive officer at George & Lynch, Inc.

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Photo by Dick Dubroff/Final Focus

The Large Value of Being Small

Why job seekers should look local before global **BY LISA DEROSE, CPA, CGMA**

COMPETITION AMONG BUSINESSES is no longer limited to winning clients and customers, the real battlefield is finding and retaining talent. Employers need to reflect and ask themselves if their workplace is ready for this new world, and what does “ready” even mean? If they’re waiting for a return to yesteryear where employees had no expectation of a work-life balance, they’ll be waiting for a long time to forever. This question of readiness is even more significant for small employers. Without the name recognition and deep pockets of major corporations, how do businesses win the employee battle?

Small businesses should never feel at a disadvantage for being small because there are large benefits. When working for a small business, employees can expect an environment with opportunities for growth, where they can impact change, and experience job variety that larger employers are challenged to provide. Granted, there are advantages to being a part of a massive corporation. However, if someone wants to feel a true sense of teamwork and ownership (and not relegated to being a number in a cube), it’s much more likely to happen on a small team versus one with thousands of members.

Living in Delaware is much like this point. How many times do simple conversations with fellow Delawareans lead to a mutual connection? It's part of the charm of the First State. Perhaps the biggest strength to being a local Delaware company are the deep relationships that develop. Thanks to these personal connections, it's not unheard of to have business relationships that are decades long.

In terms of specific actions employers can take to obtain, and possibly more important retain their employees, it's time to be creative. The worst thing employers can do in terms of retention is to forget about an employee once they come onboard. This is a common mistake, especially in the case of small businesses where people are busy and juggling responsibilities beyond their job description. Just think of how many times you see a business owner stepping in to make deliveries or covering the phones in order to ensure uninterrupted customer service. Ignoring an employee—or as they may see it, taking them for granted—is at a company's peril.

Each business should understand what the employee lifecycle looks like for their industry and identify any weak spots. It's not enough to simply acquire employees, they must be given development opportunities, encouraged to grow, and rewarded for endeavors (even if they're not successful). Losing employees to neglect is both expensive and inefficient. In this competitive landscape, no one is guaranteed to find a quick and qualified replacement.

At Whisman Giordano & Associates, we have the motto of "Building Extraordinary Relationships" and we place a value on both internal and external customer service. Our firm offers virtual work, casual dress, profit sharing, training and education opportunities, flexible scheduling, technology purchases, and teambuilding activities such as virtual escape rooms, crab feasts, charitable run/walks, food drives, and even named a race at Delaware Park after an employee celebrating 25 years with us. Employees have access to even larger opportunities such as attending conferences, and for those early in their careers, accessing and learning from senior staff. We believe that doing the right thing by employees, clients, and customers is essential to every successful business.

The future of work may have been moving incrementally in this direction prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, but now employers have been thrust into this new world faster than anyone could have imagined. It's time to assess what makes an employer an attractive place to work because it's much more than a paycheck. It's about value, balance, engagement, and worth. ■



Lisa DeRose, CPA, CGMA is a director at Whisman Giordano & Associates, a 2020 Superstars in Business winner.

THE FUTURE OF U.S. COMPETITIVENESS: DELAWARE'S INNOVATION ADVANTAGE

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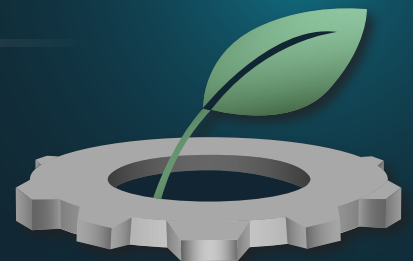
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A Human Approach to Stemming the Tide of the Great Resignation

BY LEAH COLES

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF businesses are struggling to retain and attract talented workers amidst the Great Resignation—offering higher wages, more paid time off, signing bonuses, and more. Business solutions to a business challenge. But what about the human side? This is an element that must be addressed if we are going to stem the tide of the Great Resignation.

One of the results of the sudden upheaval of remote work and job loss is that millions of workers experienced a massive shift that caused them to question if the sacrifices they were making for their jobs—which suddenly tossed millions to the unemployment rolls during the early days of the pandemic—were worth it.

To understand the human side, consider the experience of Adria Horn, a United States military veteran who was deployed overseas five times between 2003 and 2010—it wasn't until after Horn's third mandatory return and integration briefing that she began to understand why the experience of returning home left her feeling like things she was looking forward to had changed, beyond her control, and she didn't fit in. You can read more about Horn's assessment of her feelings returning from deployment and the parallel she draws to employees who are struggling with the upheaval that's resulted from the pandemic in the McKinsey Quarterly article, *A Military Veteran Knows Why Your Employees Are Leaving*.

Thinking about Horn's experience, consider what workers across the First State, and the country, are experiencing as the pandemic appears to wane, only to have a new variant emerge and seemingly set us back. All whilst we juggle return to work, new requirements at social events, school and work, and adjustments to our work schedules while our kids are in, and then out of school over and over again. While millennials and Gen Xers have already embraced digitalization, older generations are being forced to race up a steep learning curve just to conduct day-

to-day business and remain competitive in the workplace. We—all of us—have essentially been deployed to the frontlines of the pandemic multiple times without any warning, preparation, or adequate tools to help us navigate the twists, turns, and setbacks.

Viewed through the lens of workers experiencing a lack of connectivity, a loss of place and control amidst the ambiguity of an invisible enemy (the virus), and a waning skillset, leaders can begin to sketch out

real solutions to the challenges of recruiting, training, and retaining the talented workforce they need to move their business forward.

It starts with a transformational approach—helping employees see their place in the organization, its goals and successes. This isn't anything new, it's just been amplified amidst our collective response to the loss of the norms we enjoyed B.C.—before COVID.

You may well find that the solution lays not in higher pay and career opportunities alone, but rather a coupling of those things with a greater focus on cultivating space for employees to experience belonging, helping them see that the time and energy they put into their work is reflected many times over in the value they deliver to society (purpose).

And while security is one of the basic human needs that none of us can quite deliver on right now, what you can offer are tools to help your employees develop and maintain a resilient mindset to sustain themselves and their loved ones through the adjustment to our collective new normal. ■



Leah Coles is vice president of brand and community engagement at Goodwill of Delaware and Delaware County, Inc.



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Responding to the Great Resignation

Flexibility found through remote and part-time options

BY JULIANNE SPINGLER AND ANGELA COAXUM

IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS since the start of the pandemic, and the ever-changing needs of jobseekers and current staff members continue to challenge employers. In the wake of the Great Resignation, company leaders have had to not only re-evaluate policies and culture but respond aptly with the right type of perks and incentives that both attract and retain.

"I worked in a hedge fund for 16 years, but in the last few, I started to realize that I was spending three-and-a-half to four hours commuting on top of my nine-to-ten hours in the office. I was leaving before my kids woke up for school and coming home just in time to eat a quick dinner and put them to bed. After taking some time off to support my family

during the pandemic, I knew I wanted to pivot to an industry that focuses on helping others, which is why YPTC seemed like a good fit."

Another key aspect of YPTC's comprehensive remote work approach is increased flexibility in scheduling through a multitude of part-time positions available. Part-time work is an option for those seeking even further autonomy over their schedules without sacrificing any opportunities for growth. YPTC's part-time employees are valuable members of the team and help the company maintain a flexible and people-focused culture.

"Since becoming an associate nine months ago, YPTC has been flexible in allowing me to work part-time and assist in taking care of my kids. At no time have I been pressured to work more, and I've always been provided help when extra projects arise or a client requests more of my time," said Carl. "The ability to learn a new industry while not taking too much time away from my ultimate goal of being a good dad is what I enjoy most about working here," Lesaca said.

While the last few years have been marked by unpredictability, one thing we know for certain is that the trends of the working world will shift even further beyond 2022. YPTC plans to consistently evaluate its policies, principles, and mission to best serve its staff. The overall flexibility, well-rounded benefits program, and people-focused culture has already set the company up for a successful future. ■

As part of its own pandemic-related evolution, Your Part-Time Controller (YPTC) introduced new benefits such as upgraded equipment and an annual tech stipend for a more comprehensive work-from-home environment, as well as highlighted its flexible options for part-time and remote work.

In the coming year, YPTC is renewing its focus on the rapidly changing remote work landscape and overall livelihood of its employees. This translates to first understanding the diversity of lifestyles within the company, then providing proper support and the right tools. By investing in peer-to-peer connection initiatives and the latest technology, and continuing to emphasize work-life balance, YPTC exemplifies its ability to accommodate all staff members in a remote work setting. For Carl Lesaca, an associate in Central New Jersey, this level of accommodation was transformational:



Angela Coaxum is a manager and **Julianne Spingler** is a marketing content coordinator at YPTC.

WHAT'S NEXT? Chamber Calendar

THE FUTURE OF U.S. COMPETITIVENESS: DELAWARE'S INNOVATION ADVANTAGE

MARCH 16, 2022

Spring Manufacturing & Policy Conference

The future is now. Join the conversation shaping the future of manufacturing in the First State.

This half-day virtual conference will feature candid conversations tackling the labor shortage crisis manufacturers are currently experiencing. We will also hear from keynote, Dr. Kelvin Lee, institute director at NIIMBL, who will highlight innovation occurring in Delaware.

\$45 Member | \$60 Future Member



APRIL 4, 2022

185th Annual Dinner

Delaware's premier business event has always been the place to be for high-level networking. It is an opportunity to mingle with your colleagues, friends, and new acquaintances.

We are pleased to have Dr. Kathleen Shelton, executive vice president and chief technology officer of FMC Corporation, as this year's distinguished keynote speaker.

\$275 Member | \$350 Future Member

\$125 Member Livestream | \$200 Future Member Livestream



MARCH 23, 2022

Networking Breakfast at MySherpa

Join us for our first in-person Networking Breakfast of the year at MySherpa, a managed IT services firm in Pike Creek.

Free to attend.



MAY 5, 2022

Chamber Leadership Breakfast with Doneene Damon

We are pleased to kick off our 2022 Chamber Leadership series with Doneene Damon, the first Black woman president of Delaware law firm—Richards, Layton & Finger.

\$40 Member | \$55 Future Member

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ChristianaCare's Gene Editing Institute is Exposing Young Female Minds to Biomedical Technology

ChristianaCare's Gene Editing Institute is expanding its educational outreach to high schools and colleges with its groundbreaking CRISPR in Box™ Educational Toolkit to increase the understanding of one of the most powerful biomedical technologies that is closer each day to impacting the way diseases are treated.

In January, students at Salem Academy in Winston Salem, North Carolina experienced access to CRISPR in a Box™, a new educational resource that inspires interest in gene editing. Salem Academy, exclusive to girls in grades 9-12, became the first school in North Carolina to offer the workshop as it pivots its academic focus to a STEAM academy.

"It has been incredible to see the delight in the eyes of the intelligent young women at the Salem Academy as they discover the wonder and power of CRISPR," said Amanda Hewes, MS, education program manager for the Gene Editing Institute, which developed CRISPR in a Box™. "It is our goal to expose the world's young minds to the latest biomedical tools that will ultimately change the way we treat and cure disease, and to encourage the growth of the next diverse generation of genomic scientists and leaders."

"This experience has meant a great deal to me and allowed me to experience hands-on, not just taking notes in a class," said Kayla Parker, Salem Academy sophomore, "It has helped me figure out what I want to do in the future."

"Our partnership with ChristianaCare and the Gene Editing Institute will create new and innovative possibilities for our aspiring women scientists to learn cutting edge science and explore a future career in biotechnology, science, and medicine," said Dr. Summer McGee, president of Salem Academy and College. "This unique experience is exactly what sets Salem Academy apart as a national leader in building the next generation of women leaders in STEAM."

Beebe Welcomes New Infectious Disease Physician

Beebe Medical Group welcomed L.J. Romel Crèvecoeur, MD, to its Infectious Disease and Travel Medicine team.

"We know the importance of infectious disease experts because of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Stephen Keiser, chief administrative officer, Beebe Medical Group. "Dr. Crèvecoeur joins Beebe's stellar team of Drs. Chasanov and Olewiler to care of the Sussex County community."

After receiving his medical degree at the State University Medical School in Haiti, he completed his Internal Medicine residency at the Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education affiliated to Geisinger CMC in Scranton, Pa. He then completed his infectious disease fellowship at Drexel University's Hahnemann

University Hospital in Philadelphia.

"I am thrilled to join Beebe and be part of a dedicated team well known for its pursuit of excellence in the medical field here in Sussex County," Dr. Crèvecoeur said. "I am very enthusiastic about Infectious Disease, and contributing to the ongoing effort to keep our community safe is my goal."

He is fluent in English and Spanish, as well as French and Haitian Creole, which are his native languages.



Easterseals Receives Grant from Capital One

Easterseals Delaware & Maryland's Eastern Shore received a grant from Capital One to support financial

empowerment of people with disabilities. The grant will support a financial education program that will benefit participants in Easterseals day programs for adults with physical and intellectual disabilities. The program is hosted virtually so all program participants and Capital One employee volunteers, who host the program, are able to participate in this interactive and fun class that supports the fundamentals of financial empowerment.

"Easterseals depends on the support from our local community to continue to provide inclusive, quality and engaging programs," Ken Sklenar, Easterseals president and CEO, said. "We are grateful for Capital One's commitment to supporting our mission so that people with disabilities and seniors can live, learn, work and play in our communities."

Delaware Transit Corporation Recognized Nationally

Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC) was named one of 2022's Best Workplaces for Commuters in the nation for offering employees exceptional commuter benefits.

To receive this designation, DTC met the National Standard of Excellence and is among a select group of workplaces in the United States that achieved the Best Workplaces for Commuters by providing an array of commuter benefits and the addition of a formal telework policy implemented in 2021. DTC offers employees several commuter benefits options, including:

- Free DART bus service for all DTC employees
- Teleworking program, which allows for employee work-schedule flexibility for applicable positions
- Carpool matching program
- Emergency Ride Home program

Woodlawn Trustees Breaks Ground on Phase 4 of The Flats

Developers and officials broke ground in January for Phase 4 of The Flats, a multiphase housing project that is redeveloping Wilmington property from the early 1900s into quality affordable housing for low-income individuals and those with disabilities. The Todmorden Foundation is leading the project through its partnership with Woodlawn Trustees.

The Flats has become a major driver of Wilmington's economic development, representing a capital investment of more than \$110 million in the city. The project has created hundreds of construction and auxiliary-service jobs and spurred new development in the neighborhood. Phase 4 of The Flats focuses on the intersection of Bayard Avenue and West 7th St. in downtown Wilmington. The Flats is a seven-phase project that, when complete, will consist of 434 modern, affordable units with access to public transportation, on-site supportive services, 24-hour maintenance services, free wireless internet, and an on-site community center.

"I could not be more optimistic about the future of our city," said Wilmington City Mayor Mike Purzycki. "There are numerous examples today of how Wilmington is growing and becoming stronger. This reinvigorated neighborhood—indeed community—known as The Flats is a superior example of why Wilmington's future looks bright. I congratulate you on the careful and thoughtful

multiphase redevelopment of William Bancroft's original project of 120 years ago. This is a true game changer in terms of job creation and economic development and addressing the need for quality affordable housing while bringing about overall neighborhood improvement."



Highmark Earns Top Score in 2022 Corporate Equality Index

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware received a score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's 2022 Corporate Equality Index, the nation's foremost benchmarking survey and report measuring corporate policies and practices related to LGBTQ+ workplace

equality. They join the ranks of 840 major U.S. businesses that also earned top marks this year.

"The dedication of Highmark team members to creating a safe, healthy and inclusive work environment, whether

in person or virtually, is the driving force behind this recognition. Highmark companies are committed to ensuring our team members, and all the people



Newsbites

and businesses we serve, are free to be themselves,” said Nick Moriello, president of Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware. “This acknowledgment is about more than the designation itself and more a testament to the Highmark Delaware team and the positive workplace culture they create together.”

Bryan Mack Joins Delaware Prosperity Partnership

Bryan Mack, a resident of Sussex County, Delaware, has joined Delaware Prosperity Partnership (DPP) in the role of business development manager.

The Delaware native and University of Delaware graduate most recently served as community relations coordinator at Delaware Technical



Bryan Mack

Community College. He previously served as director of scheduling in the Washington, D.C., office of U.S. Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del. DPP leads Delaware’s economic development efforts to attract, grow and retain businesses; build a stronger entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem; and support private employers in identifying and developing talent. DPP’s Business Development team works with site selectors, executives and developers focused on where to locate or grow a business; helps with reviewing potential sites and cost-of-living analyses; and works closely with economic development partners statewide, as well as with the state’s Division of Small Business.

Working from both Sussex County and the DPP headquarters

in Wilmington, Mack will promote Delaware as a business location by coordinating corporate visits, hosting prospects, representing Delaware at economic development events and conducting individual outreach and

cultivation with site selectors and other key players in business location. He also will connect with Delaware’s current business leaders to ensure DPP has a clear sense of the needs of Delaware businesses.



Hyatt House Lewes/Rehoboth Beach Celebrates Official Opening

Hyatt House Lewes/Rehoboth Beach, the first Hyatt House hotel in Lewes, DE opened its doors to guests and the local community in February. Developed by Harvey, Hanna & Associates and operated by TKO Hospitality Management, Hyatt House Lewes/Rehoboth Beach is conveniently located in the heart of Lewes. The hotel will provide guests with the service and convenience of hotel living with the casual comforts of home.

The new 105-room, extended stay contemporary hotel, features all suite rooms with kitchenettes, a fitness center accessible to all guests, a dining/bar area, meeting rooms, Delaware’s largest indoor lap pool, and an outdoor communal area with fire pits and gas grills. The hotel is well-positioned to accommodate long-term stay guests and beach visitors as well as guests and customers from surrounding businesses and colleges.

“After having proudly established the very first Hyatt branded hotel in Dewey Beach, DE, we committed early on to expanding Hyatt’s offerings on the Delmarva Peninsula for our loyal patrons,” stated Thomas J. Hanna, president, Harvey, Hanna & Associates. “While COVID-19 disrupted the hospitality industry nationwide, we strongly believe in the fundamentals that exist within the mid-Atlantic’s drive-to resort markets. There are more than 30 million people located within a three-hour drive of the Delmarva Peninsula.”

Did you miss the Chamber Chatter online? Here are our most popular posts on social media...



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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



FMC Corporation: Kathy Shelton, FMC's vice president and chief technology officer, has quietly orchestrated some of Delaware and the world's sharpest agricultural innovations. She leads an organization of over 800 scientists globally.

Learn more about her and FMC's presence in Delaware from the **Delaware State Chamber of Commerce** in the January/February edition of Delaware Business Magazine <http://ow.ly/Xc6H50HVVfj>



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@DEStateChamber: Second stop on the [#TasteofDelaware](#) tour - [@paintedstave](#) in Smyrna! [@chriscoons](#)



EDiS Company: What a great response to recruit/retain talented Delaware youth to stay, invest, and build our community. EDiS is a proud member of the [@DEStateChamber](#) and support the [@petedupontff](#). Most of all, we participate in [#InternDelaware](#) and encourage you to too!



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» University of Notre Dame junior Michael McKenzie spent summer 2021 as an intern at BPGS Construction. McKenzie...



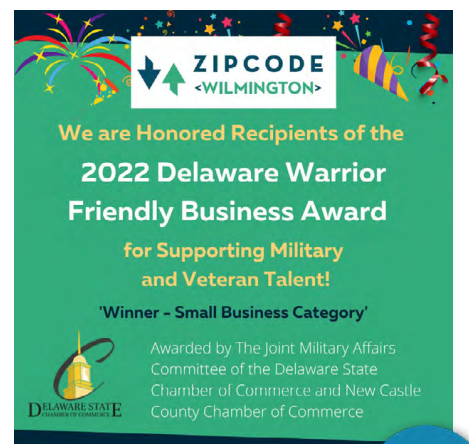
Wilmington Blue Rocks: Here's some behind-the-scenes pics from our photo shoot with the **Delaware State Chamber** yesterday! Keep your eyes peeled next month for something special commemorating 30 year of Blue Rocks baseball! [#debiz](#)



Zip Code Wilmington: We are incredibly excited to announce that **Zip Code Wilmington** will receive the 2022 Warrior Friendly Business Award (Small Business Category)!

Special thanks to the Joint Military Affairs Committee of the **Delaware State Chamber of Commerce** and the **New Castle County Chamber of Commerce** for this special recognition of our support of [#military](#) and [#veteran](#) talent!

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This State Chamber staff directory lists phone numbers and email addresses, as well as individual areas of responsibility.

If you need business assistance or information, please don't hesitate to call.



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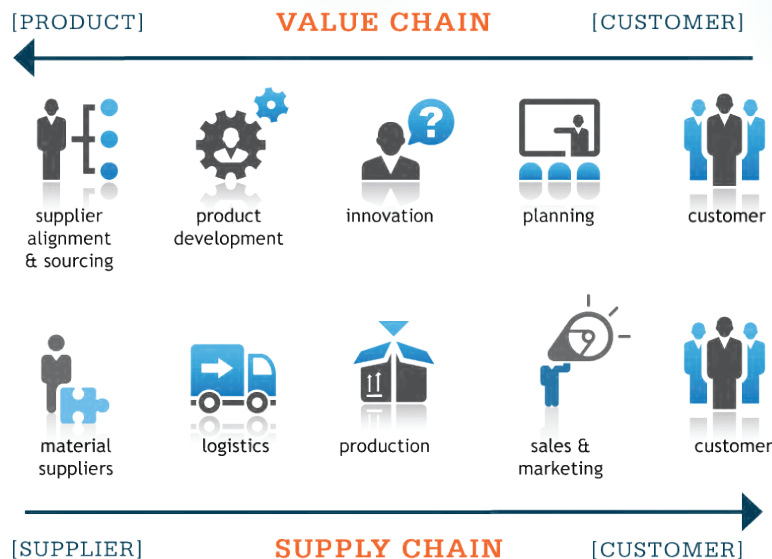
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The mission of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce is to promote an economic climate that strengthens the competitiveness of Delaware businesses and benefits citizens of the state. The Chamber will provide services members want; it will serve and be recognized as the primary resource on matters affecting companies of all sizes; and it will be the leading advocate for business with government in Delaware.

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Since 1973, Whisman Giordano & Associates has combined technical expertise with a commitment to building extraordinary relationships with our clients and the community. We understand that behind the numbers is a dream, a mission, a purpose. You, as a fellow human, and your business matter to us.

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