

NETWORKS

DIGITAL NEWS

The truth behind the ROI— a Chamber Member's perspective

When we recruit new members to the Blair County Chamber, we're not here to polish the chrome — we're here to lift the hood and show you the engine that really powers our community.

It's easy to claim that Chamber membership is a solid investment that can reap benefits for a business. We'll even throw in the data. Based on a Schapiro report consumers are 63% more likely to buy from a chamber member business while 69% of consumers believe the business is a good member of the community when they are a chamber member. The Harris Poll shows that 65% of consumers feel that their local chamber advocates for initiatives and policies that are in the best interest of their business.

So, this reasons to ask, is the hype surrounding the value of chamber membership just smoke and mirrors? The data says otherwise.

When the idea to open an Altoona location of [LCBC Church](#) came about, Pastor Corey Blockus had a checklist with some similarities as any traditional business does when developing an expansion strategy.

"Some similarities between operating a church versus a business is that businesses in general care about the community they are in and want to make a difference; we do as well," Blockus said.

Location, strategic plans, marketing; it's all the same regardless of whether you are creating a community gathering place or are in manufacturing.

"Usually both churches and businesses use marketing and strategies to be focused around helping people know what the mission and focus of their church or business is," he said.

While developing community engagement plans, one item that Blockus did anticipate was developing a relationship with his local chamber of commerce.

"Throughout the process of opening the Altoona location, joining the chamber was my plan from the very beginning because we are relationship/people based, and we want to get to know people. We want to be the church that when there's a need or a crisis in the community, people know us, or think of us, to call for help. That's why having a membership with the chamber was so attractive—to get to know others here and for them to know us," Blockus added.

The secret to maximizing the value of your membership? Use it. We understand that people aren't simply joining chambers, they join trust. They don't just write checks for sponsorships or events, they make investments. That is the core value of chamber membership. Our goal is to build relationships with our current and prospective members while rewarding your loyalty with interest.

So let's get the conversation started and we hope to see you soon.



Pastor Corey Blockus welcomes community members to LCBC Church.

Connections to careers

Career exploration can be an important tool in helping high school students discover their interests while making decisions about their future. Students who participate in programs such as the Blair County Chamber's BASICS program, Career Shadowing Week, have a broadened awareness of jobs and industries than they might see in their immediate surroundings.

In November, 316 juniors from Blair County schools spent time with local businesses, learning about a particular career in which they've expressed an interest. Each year the response from the business community has been outstanding. This year alone more than 65 businesses agreed to act as a host, many of which hosted multiple students.

Career Shadowing is just one part of BASICS - Businesses and Schools Investing in Cooperative Solutions, that assists students with their future career paths.



Bellwood high school student, Giuliana Gummo, left, shadowed Andrea Ubaldi of [Cassus Media](#), while exploring career opportunities in marketing.

The Mill welcomes new IT tenant

Silk Mills Properties (SMP) Inc., owners of "The Mill," in partnership with the Altoona Blair County Development (ABCD) Corporation, announced SMP has executed a lease with their latest tenant to the building. Muni-Link, LLC will occupy the remaining space on the second floor, totaling over 16,700 square feet. Muni-Link is part of the Neptune Technology Group brand, a software company headquartered in Tallahassee, Alabama, which supports more than 4,000 water utilities across North America. Roper Technologies, a venture capital firm and Neptune's parent company, recently purchased Muni-Link, a spin-out business of Blair County-based Link Computer Corporation.

"This is another major step forward for The Mill's development potential and a win for our local economy," said Stephen McKnight, President and CEO of the Altoona Blair County Development Corporation. "Not only is The Mill contributing to the growth of a home-grown Blair County business, but it is also continuing to help rejuvenate an important City neighborhood with new employees and foot traffic to surrounding businesses," McKnight added.

Muni-Link has grown to become one of the leading utility bill management



software companies in the U.S., established to serve local governments and municipal authorities. The Mill will serve as its new headquarters.

About The Mill Building Altoona

Originally built between 1894 and 1904 as a silk mill factory, 2400 8th Avenue produced some of the finest silk in the country. Capital improvements include a complete façade renovation, the reintroduction of arched windows, and the restoration of the iconic smokestack. The property spans nearly 100,000 square feet, offering multi-use condominium units immediately available for sale or lease. For more information visit:

loopnet.com/Listing/2400-8th-Ave-Altoona-PA/18261970/ or contact Matt Fox, VP of Business Development and Retention at matff@abccdcorp.org.

Chamber Young Professionals place high importance on giving back

The Chamber's Young Professionals program continues to shine as a driving force for community impact, fueled by members who are eager to give back. These emerging leaders understand that investing time and talent into their community strengthens the place they call home.

Earlier this month, young professionals gathered for a fun evening at their annual Holiday Trivia event. True to its mission, guests were asked to help support a local non-profit.

"YP members are committed to making a difference in Blair County. This time we chose to collect unopened toys for Family Services Incorporated's Santa Project. This provides Christmas gifts to over 35 families with children," said



Richard Servello, YP committee chair.

For more information on how you can become a part of the Chamber's Young Professionals program, contact Megan Rossman, program manager at the Chamber, at mrossman@blairchamber.com.

SAVE *the* DATE

THE STATE OF THE COUNTY:

THE YEAR IN REVIEW & OUTLOOK FOR 2026

BREAKFAST CLUB SERIES

JANUARY 15 • 7:45-9 AM

BLAIR COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER

Breakfast Club 2026 Series Sponsor:

**Altoona-Blair County Airport
& Contour Airlines**

Congratulations!

...to the following women (and Chamber Members) for being named to the Pennsylvania Business Central's 2025 Women Making A Difference list:

Allison Johnson,

[1st Summit Bank](#)

Cristin Long, Esq.,

[McQuaide Blasko, Inc.](#)

Beth Dellaposta and Debra Dellaposta,

[Doing Better Business](#)

Susan Meier and Becky Crilly,

[Reliance Bank](#)

Elizabeth Burke, Burke & Company, LLC
dba [S.P. McCarl & Company](#)

Megan McGeary Porter, [UDNI](#)

Miriah Lassinger, [PennStress](#)

Julianne Steinbacher, Esq.,

[Steinbacher, Goodall & Yurchak](#)

Val Barner, [Skills of Central PA](#)

Samantha Pope, [The Academy](#)

[Preschool & Early Education Center](#)

Stay in the know!

Penn State Altoona's newsletter drops every other Tuesday with can't-miss events, campus highlights, and community fun all in one quick read.

Check it out [HERE](#)



PennState
Altoona

BLAIR COUNTY 2026

Home Garden & Healthy Living

SHOWCASE

BLAIR COUNTY
CONVENTION CENTER

**Feb. 27, 28
Mar. 1**

Is becoming an exhibitor a good choice for your business?

If you answer yes to any of the questions below,
then the Showcase is the perfect fit for you.

- ✓ Do you specialize in home improvements, construction or interior design?
- ✓ Is landscaping, lawn care or gardening a specialty of your business?
- ✓ Do you offer products or services to help customers achieve a healthy lifestyle?
- ✓ Are you an independent sales consultant wanting to promote/sale your products?

Don't miss this great vendor opportunity!

**BLAIR COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**
FIRST FRONTIER - BLAIR COUNTY, PA

BBA blair/bedford
builders association

Reserve your booth today _____

BlairChamber.com/homeshow

