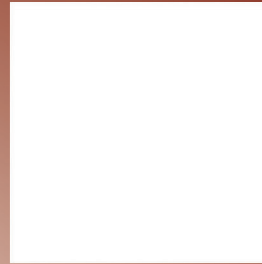
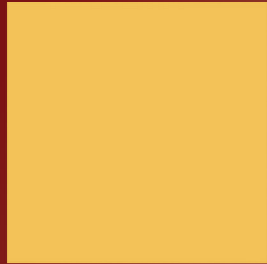


# INDIANA COUNTY · PENNSYLVANIA



## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



## Executive Committee

*Chairman*  
**Jim Kinneer**  
IRMC

*Vice Chairman*  
**Steve Drahnak**  
S&T Bank

*Secretary*  
**Laurie Kuzneski**  
Kuzneski Ins. Group

*Treasurer*  
**Josh Rosenberger**  
700 Shop

## Board of Directors

**Mary Beth Akbay**  
Romeo's Pizza

**Bernie Lockard**  
Lockard Company / Pacific Pride

**Mark Berezansky**  
IUP Research Institute  
(Ex-Officio)

**Luke McKelvy**  
Levity Brewing Company  
(Ex-Officio)

**Dennis Bray**  
ICDC  
(Reciprocal)

**Steve McPherson**  
MGK Technologies  
(Reciprocal)

**Dave Brocious**  
ClimaShield Industries

**Geoffrey Mills**  
Eberly College of Business and  
Technology  
(Ex-Officio)

**Rick Fuellner**  
Jimmy Stewart Airport  
(Ex-Officio)

**Michael Moyer**  
Environmental Service Laboratories  
(Ex-Officio)

**Chad Carrick**  
REA Energy

**John Nelson**  
Nelson Insurance  
(Ex-Officio)

**Dick Clawson**  
Indiana County Development  
Corporation  
(Reciprocal)

**Dave Reed**  
First Commonwealth Bank  
(Executive Committee)

**William Darr**  
Barbor, Sottile, and Darr  
(Ex-Officio)

**Sherry Renosky**  
Indiana Mall  
(Ex-Officio)

**Dr. Michael Driscoll**  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

**Calvin Farren**  
Turner Dairy  
(Ex-Officio)

**Joe Reschini**  
Reschini Group

**Rich Fiscus**  
S&T Bank

**Carrie Riggle**  
First Commonwealth Bank

**Bryan Force**  
Force Inc.  
(Executive Committee)

**Clinton Smith**  
Government and Civil Employee  
Services

**Ryan Glista**  
Indiana First Bank

**Brett Stewart**  
CNB Bank

**Beth Gregg**  
Environmental Service Laboratories

**Christine Toretto**  
Palladio LLC  
(Ex-Officio)

**Linda Gwinn**  
Blairsville Community Development  
Authority  
(Ex-Officio)

**Gregg Van Horn**  
Indiana County Tourist Bureau  
(Reciprocal)

**Todd Good**  
Good and Associates

**Robert Walbeck**  
Walbeck Insurance

**Wendy Haislip**  
IRMC  
(Ex-Officio)

**James Wagner**  
Arin IU  
(Ex-Officio)

**Elizabeth Hutton**  
Kuzneski and Lockard, Inc.

**Jim Wiley**  
Indiana County Development  
Corporation  
(Reciprocal)

**Joe Kinter**  
Upstreet Financial Advisors  
(Ex-Officio)

## Directors Emeritus

1975.. The Honorable Earl E. Handler  
1977..... Lewis L. McGill  
1982..... Cecil C. Spadafora

1983..... S.W. Jack, Jr.  
1984..... Dr. Charles J. Potter



## Nominations and Election of Directors to the Chamber Board

The 2020 Nominations Committee met on November 9, 2020 in the Chamber office. The responsibility of the committee was to review nominees submitted to serve on the Chamber's Board of Directors according to the by-laws.

### 2020 Nominations Committee

- **Steve Drahnak**  
S&T Bank
- **Jim Kinneer**  
IRMC
- **Josh Rosenberger**  
700 Shop
- **William Darr**  
Barbor, Sottile & Darr
- **CJ Spadafora**  
Colonial Motor Mart
- **Luke Shively**  
McNaughton Brothers Moving and Storage

After reviewing current board positions and nominations submitted by the overall Chamber membership, the Nominations Committee moved to propose the following Slate of Directors to the Chamber Board of Directors beginning on Jan. 1, 2021:

- **Clinton Smith**, Government & Civil Employee Services (Re-elected to a second three-year term)
- **Rob Walbeck**, Walbeck Insurance (Re-elected to a second three-year term)
- **Eric Neal**, YMCA of Indiana County (Elected first three-year term)
- **Mark Volovic**, Indiana Regional Medical Center (Elected first three-year term)

*The Chamber thanks these individuals for their*



# INDIANA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## 2020 AT A GLANCE

1019 PHILADELPHIA STREET  
INDIANA, PA 15701

ENHANCE RETENTION & EXPANSION OF BUSINESSES IN  
INDIANA COUNTY  
108 YEARS SERVING INDIANA COUNTY

593 MEMBER BUSINESSES

20 NEW MEMBERS

89.6% RETENTION RATE

140+ YOUNG PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERS

240 INDIANA READY DESIGNATED GRADUATES



### SOCIAL MEDIA



2198 FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

[www.facebook.com/indianacountychamber](http://www.facebook.com/indianacountychamber)



1003 TWITTER FOLLOWERS

[www.twitter.com/indianacountycococ](http://www.twitter.com/indianacountycococ)

3008 WEEKLY EBLAST SUBSCRIBERS

2992 MEMBERS INDIANA COUNTY SHOP LOCAL FB GROUP.

### SUPPORT | NETWORK | EDUCATE | ADVOCATE



ENRICHMENT BREAKFASTS AND MIXERS

CHAMBER CHECK-INS & CHATS

EGGS & ISSUES LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

BRAINS & GRAINS SEMINARS

GOLF OUTING

CANDIDATES FORUM

COVID RESOURCE TAB

### BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

BULK MAIL SERVICE

NOTARY SERVICE

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

RIBBON CUTTINGS

MEMBERS ONLY REFERRALS

CERTIFICATES OF ORIGIN

AND MORE!



[WWW.INDIANACOUNTYCHAMBER.US](http://WWW.INDIANACOUNTYCHAMBER.US)



## Special Thanks to our Platinum Chamber Sponsors



## Special Thanks to our Gold Chamber Sponsors



DRUG STORES  
MEDICAL SUPPLY



**Gibson-Thomas**  
ENGINEERING



## Special Thanks to our Silver Chamber Sponsors



**CLAY & GASCOINE PLLC**

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Jon M. Gascoine, CPA ~ Wendy L. Newcomer, CPA

511 Airport Professional Center  
1380 Route 286 Hwy East  
Indiana, PA 15701(724)-463-1450  
Fax (724)-463-1461  
cgcpa@cgnpcpa.com  
www.cgnpcpa.comBoard of Directors  
Indiana County Chamber of Commerce  
Indiana, Pennsylvania**Independent accountants' compilation report**

Management is responsible for the accompanying financial statements of Indiana County Chamber of Commerce (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the statement of financial position as of September 30, 2020, and the related statements of activities and changes in net assets, functional expenses, and cash flows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles. We have performed a compilation engagement in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services promulgated by the Accounting and Review Services Committee of the AICPA. We did not audit or review the financial statements nor were we required to perform any procedures to verify the accuracy or completeness of the information provided by management. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion, a conclusion, nor provide any form of assurance on these financial statements.

As discussed in Note 1 to the financial statements, U.S. generally accepted accounting principles require revenue to be deferred when payments are received, but not earned. The effect of this departure from U.S. generally accepted accounting principles on the accompanying financial statements has not been determined.

November 30, 2020

**INDIANA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2020****ASSETS****Current assets**

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 146,269
Accounts receivable	30,761
Total current assets	<u>177,030</u>

**Investments**

2,600

**Property and equipment**

Equipment	10,008
Less accumulated depreciation	(9,099)
Net property and equipment	<u>909</u>

**Total assets**\$ 180,539**LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS****Current liabilities**

Accounts payable	\$ 10,544
Payroll liabilities	2,818
Total current liabilities	<u>13,362</u>

**Net assets without donor restrictions**167,177**Total liabilities and net assets**\$ 180,539

See independent accountants' compilation report and notes to financial statements.

**INDIANA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS  
YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2020****Revenues**

Membership income	\$ 212,178
Program income	55,405
CCSC income	3,941
Interest income	1,791
Other income	100
Board meetings	<u>66</u>
Total revenues	<u>273,481</u>

**Expenses**

General and administrative	108,419
Networking events	63,285
Member benefits and services	36,884
Marketing	18,734
Community involvement	16,990
Affiliate membership	9,231
Board meetings	<u>4,495</u>

**Total expenses**258,038**Decrease in net assets before income taxes**

15,443

**Income tax refund**(191)**Decrease in net assets without donor restrictions**

15,634

**Net assets - beginning**151,543**Net assets - ending**\$ 167,177

See independent accountants' compilation report and notes to financial statements.

**INDIANA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES  
YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**

	Marketing	Member Benefits and Services	Networking Events	Affiliate Memberships	Community Involvement	Board Meetings	General and Administrative	Total
Wages and salaries	\$ 10,874	\$ 21,747	\$ 21,747	\$ -	\$ 10,874	\$ -	\$ 53,380	\$ 118,622
Program expenses	-	2,565	38,246	-	-	-	-	40,811
Dues and subscriptions	-	3,585	-	9,231	-	-	567	9,798
Communications	3,585	1,722	-	-	-	-	3,584	10,754
Membership	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,722
Rent	-	2,330	-	-	-	-	11,572	11,572
Postage	2,330	1,763	-	-	-	-	2,329	6,989
Payroll taxes	881	1,763	-	-	881	-	4,326	9,614
Board meetings	-	-	1,763	-	-	4,495	-	4,495
Community involvement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,495
Auto expense	-	3,057	-	-	5,235	-	-	5,235
Repairs and service contracts	-	-	1,529	-	-	-	2,331	6,917
Advertising costs	1,064	-	-	-	-	-	5,693	5,693
Employee benefits	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,064	1,064
Insurance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	919
Bank fees	-	50	-	-	-	-	6,849	6,899
Office equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,212	3,212
Leased equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	125	125
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,677	2,677
Professional fees and services	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,144	6,144
Office supplies	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,825	1,825
Repairs and maintenance	-	-	-	-	-	-	469	469
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,524	1,524
Training and education	-	-	-	-	-	-	893	893
Total expenditures	<u>\$ 18,734</u>	<u>\$ 36,884</u>	<u>\$ 63,285</u>	<u>\$ 9,231</u>	<u>\$ 16,990</u>	<u>\$ 4,495</u>	<u>\$ 108,419</u>	<u>\$ 258,038</u>

See independent accountants' compilation report and notes to financial statements.



**INDIANA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**  
**YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**

<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>	
Decrease in net assets	\$ 15,634
Adjustment to reconcile decrease in net assets to net cash used in operating activities	
Depreciation expense	893
(Increase) decrease in assets	
Accounts receivable	13,456
Increase (decrease) in liabilities	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	10,544
Payroll liabilities	(78)
Net cash used in operating activities	<u>40,845</u>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>	<u>-</u>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>	<u>-</u>
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents	40,449
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning	<u>105,820</u>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents, ending</b>	<u>\$ 146,269</u>

See independent accountants' compilation report and notes to financial statements.

**INDIANA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
**NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**

**1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

**Organization**

Indiana County Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) is a not-for-profit organization made up of business, professional, and civic minded people who are dedicated to the development and promotion of business and the public interest of Indiana County.

**Basis of accounting**

The accompanying financial statements of the Chamber were prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in conformity with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles, except for deferred revenue as described below.

**Cash and cash equivalents**

For purposes of the statement of cash flows, all highly liquid debt instruments purchased with an original maturity of three months or less are considered to be cash equivalents.

**Property and equipment**

The Chamber capitalizes equipment purchased over \$500. Equipment purchased by the Chamber is presented at cost. Gifts or contributions of equipment are recorded at the asset's fair market value at the time received. Depreciation is provided by the straight-line method based on the estimated useful lives of the related assets. Maintenance, repairs, and minor replacements are expensed as incurred.

**Net assets with donor restrictions**

The Chamber reports donations of cash and other assets as restricted revenue if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. Net assets with donor restrictions have been limited by donors to a specific time, period, or purpose. When a donor's restriction expires, net assets with donor restrictions are reclassified as net assets without donor restrictions and reported in the statement of activities and changes in net assets as net assets released from restrictions. Donor-restricted contributions whose restrictions are met within the same year as received are reflected as contributions without donor restrictions in the accompanying financial statements. The Chamber does not have any net assets with donor restrictions as of September 30, 2020.

**Use of estimates**

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with the accrual basis of accounting requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect certain reported amounts and disclosures. Accordingly, actual results could differ from those estimates.

**Income taxes**

The Chamber is exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code, except for monies received from Chambers of Commerce Service Corporation (CCSC) which is considered unrelated business income and is subject to federal income taxation. The Chamber recorded \$991 of income tax expense for the year ended September 30, 2020.

**Accounts receivable**

The Chamber monitors outstanding accounts receivables and charges off to expense any balances that are determined to be uncollectible. Management has not recorded an allowance for doubtful accounts for the year ended September 30, 2020. If a membership or other customer defaults on payment, the loss is recognized at the time the account is determined to be uncollectible. There was no bad debt for the year ended September 30, 2020.

**Advertising**

Advertising costs are expensed as incurred. Advertising for the year ended September 30, 2020, was \$1,064.

**Deferred revenue**

A significant portion of the Chamber's revenues are attributable to membership income, which relates to the year-long memberships that the Chamber provides. Under U.S. generally accepted accounting standards, single payments received for year-long memberships are recorded as a deferred revenue liability to the extent that the payments have not been earned. This deferred revenue would be decreased and recorded as revenue evenly throughout the year as it is earned. The Chamber has declined to record these payments as deferred revenue and instead has opted to record membership revenue in full whenever a new membership is given or a membership is renewed. This revenue is recognized when the membership invoice is generated.

**Revenue recognition**

The Chamber receives revenue from new and renewing membership dues. Renewing membership dues are billed the same month of the original chamber membership. Invoices are sent monthly for the renewal membership dues as well as any new member joining during that month. Revenue is recognized when the invoice is created.

The Chamber also receives revenue from programs and events held throughout the year. Revenues from these events are recognized upon receipt.

**Subsequent events**

Management has evaluated subsequent events through November 30, 2020; the date financial statements were available to be issued.

## Special Thanks to our Bronze Chamber Sponsors



**Uncertain tax positions**

The Chamber has adopted FASB ASC 740-10-25, *Accounting for Uncertainty in Income Taxes*. The Chamber will record a liability for uncertain tax positions when it is more likely than not that a tax position would not be sustained if examined by the taxing authority. The Chamber evaluates expiring statutes of limitations, audits, proposed settlements, changes in tax law, and new authoritative rulings.

The Chamber's evaluation on September 30, 2020, revealed no uncertain tax positions that would have a material impact on the financial statements. The 2016 through 2018 tax years remain subject to examination by the Internal Revenue Service. The Chamber does not believe that any reasonably possible changes will occur within the next twelve months that will have a material impact on the financial statements.

**2. CONCENTRATION OF CREDIT RISK FOR CASH HELD AT BANKS**

The Chamber maintains cash balances at several local banks. The amount of cash deposits at each financial institution is insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation up to \$250,000. As of September 30, 2020, the accounts did not exceed the federally insured amount.

**3. INVESTMENTS**

Investments consist of 26 shares of CCSC stock stated at cost. There is no fair market value for this stock since the Chamber is only permitted to resell the shares back to CCSC at their original cost of \$100 per share.

**4. LEASE OBLIGATIONS**

The Chamber leases office space under an operating lease that expires January 1, 2024. The terms of the lease require monthly rental payments of \$890. Future minimum payments are as follows:

For the year ending September 30,

2021	\$10,680
2022	10,680
2023	10,680
2024	<u>2,670</u>
Total	<u>\$34,710</u>

The Chamber also leases a copier machine under an equipment lease. The lease expires November 16, 2023. The terms of the lease require monthly rental payments of \$170 plus a volume charge for the number and type of copies produced. Future minimum payments are as follows:

For the year ending September 30,

2021	\$2,040
2022	2,040
2023	<u>340</u>
Total	<u>\$4,420</u>

The Chamber also leases a vehicle under an equipment lease. The lease expires on March 5, 2021. The terms of the lease require monthly payments of \$327. Future minimum payments are as follows:

For the years ending September 30,

2021	\$1,975
Total	<u>\$1,975</u>

**5. RETIREMENT PLAN**

The Chamber maintains a SIMPLE IRA plan for the benefit of its employees. The Chamber matches a percentage of employees' contributions annually. The match for the year ended September 30, 2020, was \$919, which is included in employee benefits on the statement of activities and changes in net assets.

**6. AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND LIQUIDITY**

During the year, the Chamber depends on cash flows from operations to cover costs. As of September 30, 2020, the following table shows the total financial assets held by the Chamber and the amounts of those financial assets that could readily be made available within one year of the statement of assets, liabilities, and net assets date to meet general expenditures:

Financial assets at year end	
Cash and cash equivalent	\$146,269
Accounts receivable	<u>30,761</u>
Total financial assets at year-end	<u>\$177,030</u>
Financial assets available to meet general expenditures over the next 12 months	
Cash and cash equivalent	\$146,269
Accounts receivable	<u>30,761</u>
Total financial assets available	<u>\$177,030</u>

# Chamber Update

*By Mark Hilliard, Chamber President*

2020 was a challenging year for Indiana County with the COVID-19 pandemic creating numerous obstacles for businesses around the globe. However, the support of our local community and resiliency of our small businesses have created opportunities for our region and opened the door to what could be a much brighter year ahead.

The Chamber maintained a strong membership base and furthered our efforts to sustain Indiana County's business community and enhance the overall quality of life. During the last fiscal year ending on Sept. 30, 2020, the Chamber added 24 new members bringing our total membership to 593 currently. Our retention rate for membership is 90.7%, which is one of the highest rates compared to our peer Chambers, especially during a year as challenging as this was. This helps to reinforce that our members view the Chamber as resource for business assistance and an advocate for our business community. It also emphasizes that our members are utilizing their benefits, and are happy with the products and services we provide.

During the COVID-19 shutdown the Chamber and its partners in the Indiana County Center for Economic Operations worked together to help our essential and non-essential businesses. We helped to guide our business owners to different means of financial assistance as well as provided information related to restrictions and guidelines from the state and the CDC. To help our community support our local businesses and to better understand how to support these businesses during the shutdown, the Facebook group "Indiana County Shop Local" was created. Today the group has over 3,000 members and continues to be a means for our business community to advertise their products and services.

As Indiana County began to inch closer to the Yellow Phase, "Indiana County Road to Recovery" was created. This weekly newsletter provided pandemic resources, up to date information from the CDC and Indiana Regional Medical Center, articles from our community leaders, event information, and information promoting our area businesses and the Shop Local effort.

To help give our area businesses a boost during normally slow summer months, we started Indiana County Shop Local week in July. During the week we promoted supporting our local businesses in all areas of our county and created the Chamber Cash promotion, which saw over 20 businesses help to provide incentives for customers all week long. This week was the first step in what we hope will be a bigger county-wide event in the future.

Workforce remained a top issue in Indiana County and at The Chamber in 2020. In May the Chamber concluded the first year of Indiana County READY™, an essential skills certification program adopted by all 7 Indiana County School districts. Even during a challenging conclusion to the school year, the program saw over 250 juniors and seniors throughout the county become certified as "Indiana County READY™." As we began the 2020-21 school year, we hosted a webinar to help our Indiana County teachers discover new ways to incorporate these essential skills into their classrooms. Over 150 teachers throughout the county were a part of the webinar. We continue to keep our eye on the future as we look for additional ways to help strengthen our future workforce through our school districts.

The Chamber was an advocate for the Indiana County business community and our county's workforce. As our region continues to rally against Pennsylvania's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), I participated in our county's first-ever virtual press conference in May to voice my concern over the impact that this would have on our business community and workforce. On August 25, I spoke in front of the Pennsylvania Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee at a hearing examining the economic and employment impacts of RGGI. This initiative would have a detrimental impact on the economy of our county as the carbon tax targets the coal-fired power plants that reside in our region. We will continue to join our state and local legislators in the fight against this initiative.

We continue to make improvements and create more opportunities for our members to network and stimulate more business-to-business connections. Here are some of the highlights:

- In June the Chamber held our first webinar, titled "Gearing Up for Green" to help our business community prepare to reopen and recognize what

- resources and assistance was available to them.
- On July 1, we hosted The State of the County Address featuring all three Indiana County Commissioners. The virtual event provided an opportunity for the community to be able to submit questions to the Commissioners on a variety of topics important to Indiana County residents.
  - The Chamber held the first Indiana County Chamber Golf Outing on September 24 at the Chestnut Ridge Golf Resort and Conference Center in Blairsville. 85 golfers turned out on a beautiful fall day to network and enjoy a fun round of golf.
  - The Chamber again hosted Candidate's Night in October. This year we partnered with the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Communications-Media department to do a television-style broadcast of the event on YouTube and Zoom. Candidate's Night provided our business and community members the opportunity to get to know and ask questions of the candidates running for State Senate in the 41st District and State Representative in the 62nd District.
  - The Chamber Government Relations Committee continued to be active in providing better resources for our members related to legislation and issues that affect business. The Chamber's Annual Eggs and Issues breakfast again provided an opportunity to accomplish this task.
  - The Chamber's Young Professionals Organization (YPO) held many great events to help up-and-coming business and community leaders grow their networks, opportunities and experiences.
  - Continued to support the Leader's Circle of Indiana County and other community focused organizations
  - The Chamber continues to be a regional presence through media outlets and representation on various boards and commissions.

The Chamber's purpose is centered in delivering great products and services for our members simultaneously working with local and regional leaders to improve the economy and quality of life for Indiana County. Our staff – Jill, Susan, and I – want you to get the most benefit and value from your membership and we are here to help. We encourage you to continue to get involved as we have a number of things in store for the future as gear up for an exciting 2021!

*If you need assistance at any time, please call, email or visit the Chamber. You are always welcome. Thank you again for your vital support.*

## Indiana County Chamber of Commerce

An affiliate of  Center for Economic Operations

1019 Philadelphia Street  
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15701  
Phone: (724) 465-2511  
Fax: (724) 465-3706

### Mark Hilliard

President

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### Jill Mountain

Office Manager

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### Susan Bash

Office Assistant

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Learn more about the  
Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, our  
communities, and our member businesses at:

[www.indianacountychamber.us](http://www.indianacountychamber.us)



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**Like us on**   
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IndianaCountyChamber](https://facebook.com/IndianaCountyChamber)  
**Join our Facebook Group**  
[facebook.com/  
IndianaCountyShopLocal](https://facebook.com/IndianaCountyShopLocal)



# 2020 PRESIDENT REPORT TO OUR MEMBERS

## **Thank you for your continued “Partnership for Success,” in 2020!**

It was an interesting year! Our mission, to advance the economic, commercial, business, industrial, professional, cultural, and civic welfare of Indiana County; to encourage and protect the trade and commerce of the area; and to protect the area's orderly growth and development has been accomplished through some of these highlights:

### **Indiana County READY™**

A partnership between the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, its public-school districts and its career/technical training institution(s). The worker certification program is designed to better match local employers with employees who possess the desired core skill sets. We designated 250 students as Indiana County READY™ in the first year!

### **Advocating for Community Development**

The Chamber writes letters of support for grant applications for community infrastructure improvements.

### **Advocating for Businesses**

Raising awareness of the effects Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) will have on our County.

First Indiana County Shop Local Week – held in June  
Supporting Small Business Saturday – I shop local campaign

### **Candidates Forum Night**

Your chance to hear the platform of each candidate running in the fall election, televised and lived streamed this year.

### **Ribbon Cuttings, Anniversaries and Celebrations**

Celebrating grand openings, business expansions, business anniversaries with ribbon cutting ceremonies increase visibility for members.

### **Chamber Networking Events**

In a year that seen many cancellations, some of our events were modified or held virtually.

- First Lunch Mob was held

- 2 Chamber Check-ins – held in person
- 9 Coffee Talks – virtual morning meeting
- First Golf Tournament
- First State of the County – held virtually
- Eggs & Issues – modified held in person and live streamed

### **Educational Programs**

Brains & Grains event featuring Government & Civil Employee Services, LLC – Building your Brand

### **Indiana County Road to Recovery**

Informative emails bringing our members critical information during the pandemic shutdown.

### **New Facebook Group – Indiana County Shop Local**

### **Mobile Responsive Website & Mobile App Promotion**

Check out the Chamber's updated website at [www.indianacountychamber.us](http://www.indianacountychamber.us). Create your own landing page, upload photos, information, and a clickable link to redirect visitors to your website. Community events calendar and online membership directory. COVID-19 Reference Guide.

### **Countless B2B & Consumer Referrals**

Indiana County Chamber of Commerce member are referred exclusively, stimulating business commerce in our communities.

### ***New Benefit added***

Notary Service

We will continue to create opportunities for member prosperity and provide the necessary leadership for a healthy business community. Affiliation with a trusted organization brings more credibility to your business and the Chamber looks forward to serving you in the coming year.

***Thanks again, for your continued support!***

***Mark***



# 2020 Business Year in Review

*By Chauncey Ross, Indiana Gazette*

## **Chamber of the Year**

“Perfect vision,” some might have said, as the year 2020 dawned for Indiana County.

But few could claim to have envisioned what lay ahead for the leaders, the communities and the people of the area as 2019 faded away.

This report comes with a distinct feel of several years that have elapsed the past 12 months: first, the year of anticipation and optimism that the county rang in on January 1; second, the year of trepidation that arrived with the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March; third, the year of renovation and rebirth that came with the flattened curve early in June; and finally, the year of exasperation beginning in early November marked by rampant spread of coronavirus and its accompanying casualties of the human, societal and economic types alike.

The Indiana County Chamber of Commerce stood in service to member businesses and then the community as a whole during each phase of this unprecedented year, from the celebration of a new county administration, to the response to the pandemic, to the support of the recovery and to the encouragement of our county as the virus revived.

Along with the Chamber’s full annual program of service to improve the economy and quality of life in the county, these values held by the Chamber – the spirit of unity, the resolve to succeed and the dedication to the greater good – brought the prestigious honor of being named the 2020 Chamber of the Year by the Pennsylvania Association of Chamber Professionals.



“We are incredibly honored to receive this award especially during this challenging year,” said Chamber President Mark Hilliard. “There were so many chambers and other organizations that did amazing things this year, and I think that makes this recognition even more special.”

The Chamber of the Year Award salutes organizational excellence and focuses on acknowledging one or more sig-

nificant achievements and accomplishments that a chamber has initiated, stimulated and/or led in its respective service area. Organizational excellence is evaluated in the areas of membership, programs, planning and finance.

“This is truly a team effort and a team honor,” Hilliard said. “Our entire staff and board of directors have been incredibly active and supportive throughout all of our initiatives this year, and this award is recognition of all of those efforts. A special thank you needs to also go out to Jill Mountain, our office manager, as we would not have been able to accomplish all of these things without her.”

When the COVID-19 crisis began, the chamber saw an opportunity, Hilliard said. It expanded its presence on social media and provided a new forum for businesses to market themselves, became a leader and the primary resource in distributing information to the business community, and developed a new countywide event designed to support and promote their area small businesses.

“We have accomplished a lot these past 18 months, but there is still so much to do,” Hilliard said. “We honestly feel that the best is yet to come.”

## **The Challenge of the Pandemic – and the Response**

The effect of the coronavirus pandemic on Indiana County was anything but gradual. By March 10, county leaders began gathered to assure that adequate healthcare supplies, facilities and other resources could be accessible to respond to the spread of COVID-19 in the area. Fears that the virus would be a threat to more than just the health and lives of county residents rose the weekend of March 13, when it became apparent that the pandemic could stifle the county’s commerce and culture.

On March 16, the county commissioners declared a state of emergency, and schools closed their doors March 16, pushing education leaders to rapidly devise ways to continue education, counseling and nutrition to thousands of students.

Gov. Tom Wolf ordered a virtual closing of the entire state, designating all 67 counties to the “red” phase – the strictest set of rules governing in-person contact, sizes of gatherings, limits on travel, the ability for businesses to keep their doors open. The state defined businesses as essential or non-essential and ordered closings of all but those said to be critical for sustaining life in the commonwealth.

The county commissioners and judges coordinated the closing of the courthouse and all other county related courts and facilities, assuring compliance with restrictions imposed by the state.

Other organizations in the county followed. Churches

cancelled in-person worship and fish dinners, social and fraternal organizations idled their activities, nonprofits closed their doors, volunteer fire departments cancelled their fundraising events, and scheduled events of the daily, weekly, monthly and annual kind were cancelled at every turn.

Local government offices closed to the public, employees worked by phone and set up touch-free ways for constituents to conduct business, and school boards, town councils and other agencies began holding their meetings online. Volunteer efforts rallied behind the scenes to fill the gaps. Spaghetti Bender restaurant was the first to offer no-cost daily lunch to Indiana Area School District students displaced from their daily cafeteria meals, the United Way led countywide efforts to help restore student food service and coordinate collection of donations for pandemic disaster needs.



The Indiana County Chamber of Commerce stepped up and expanded its service to the business community, reaching out and responding to non-member businesses and agencies as well as

those holding Chamber membership.

The Chamber's online "Indiana County Shop Local" page welcomed businesses to post their alternative means of serving clients and customers while brick-and-mortar locations were barred from service, and businesses introduced drive-through windows, online ordering, curbside pickup and home delivery of their products and services.

Early on, A survey conducted by University of Pittsburgh's Center for Metropolitan Studies for the Allegheny Conference on Community Development suggested that Indiana County municipalities could lose from \$1.5 million to \$6.5 million in revenues as a result of COVID-19. This signaled a time for action.

Chamber staff helped counsel businesses on their essential or non-essential status and went to bat for those seeking permission to remain in operation during the state-ordered lockdown.

The county commissioners and Indiana County Emergency Management Agency drew from its Pandemic Response Plan to form a COVID-19 Planning Team to assess the county response to the outbreak and to provide recommendations to the commissioners regarding continuity of operations. The Health and Human Services Subcommittee coordinated the donation and distribution of supplies needed by the various agencies for their response to the outbreak, such as the contributions of thousands of homemade face masks and the hundreds of splash shields, notably those made on 3D printers by the Homer-Center School District based "COVID Avengers" team of students and advisors.

A collaborative effort between IUP and Indiana Regional

Medical Center in April created a same-day COVID-19 testing program at IRMC by IUP biology professor Narayanaswamy Bharathan with equipment on loan to IRMC. The program incorporated training of IRMC staff in Bharathan's process and completed 4,500 tests near year's end. The program maintained testing accuracy while dramatically reducing costs and turnaround time.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development awarded Indiana County a grant of \$7.6 million of CARES Act funds from the County Relief Block Grant program for a cross-section of other needs throughout the county.

Planning office Director Byron Stauffer said CARES money is intended to "support COVID-19-related activities to offset the cost of direct county COVID-19 response, including purchase of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), assist businesses, including tourism related and local municipalities, provide behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment services, fund nonprofit assistance programs, and deploy broadband to unserved and underserved areas."

Indiana University of Pennsylvania received \$10 million through the CARES Act, allocated about \$5 million to assist students impacted by COVID-19 and reserving the remainder to support institutional needs at the university. Cash-strapped property owners received minor relief in meeting real estate tax obligations as the Indiana County board of commissioners and leaders of many boroughs and townships waived the traditional 10 percent penalty for late payment of real estate tax bills through the end of the year. Indiana University of Pennsylvania created its own Emergency Response Fund, designed to help defray costs experienced by students associated with technology, unexpected travel and other unanticipated expenses related to the pandemic, and set a goal of \$1 million for COVID-19 assistance.

The cancellation of the Indiana County Fair likely touched more people than any other single event that fell victim to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Replacing the county fair experience for Indiana County residents fell to the imagination of area business and community leaders. The Indiana County office of Penn State Extension Service coordinated the replacement of the 4-H competition on the J.S. Mack Community Center fairgrounds with online presentations by the youngsters, the transition to digital technology-based areas of competition and the presentation and publication of the prize winning 4-H members on the internet.

For fairgoers fond of the home crafts section, the Indiana County Faire Market set up off East Pike in White Township provided a weekly assembly of rustic goods vendors from July through October.

Late in the year, the county COVID-19 Task Force formed the REACH program, that marshals a cross-section of government, healthcare and service groups with the themes



of Resources, Education, Announcements, Community and Help to act as “a collective voice and official source for information about emerging concerns and opportunities” for Indiana County residents.

REACH has a goal of providing critical and up-to-date information about the pandemic — and other “emerging issues.” It is dedicated “to maintaining physical, emotional and economic health for Indiana County residents, businesses and organizations.” The website [www.IndianaCountyPaREACH.org](http://www.IndianaCountyPaREACH.org) aims to provide a single source for information, including the percentage of positive COVID-19 tests, local statistics, risk factors, prevention measures and testing site locations.

### **Restoring Employment**

Development company New Village Initiative LLC of Orlando, Fla., and its founder Gary Beeman, gave Indiana County its brightest moment of the year with their purchase of the vacant Wyoming Technical Institute automotive trade school buildings at Corporate Campus industrial park in Burrell Township.

New Village paid \$11.5 million for the four WyoTech buildings and Beeman predicted that the facility would be set to hire instructors and enroll students by mid-2021. Beeman said a national increase in demand for well-trained auto technicians, diesel mechanics and collision repair specialists makes the reopening feasible.

“We’re excited to be coming into the community and to restart and put back the jobs that were there and bring some more in, in the process,” Beeman said.

WyoTech’s last owner closed the 27-acre campus in June 2018.

“You hate seeing big employers go away, particularly in a somewhat rural area,” Beeman said. “And it’s sad to see the student capacity go away, because there’s such a giant need for technicians and mechanics in the world right now. And it’s growing faster than anybody can keep up with it.”

According to its website, New Village has a goal of creating 2 million new jobs in the U.S. in ventures that provide family-sustaining wages and give new life to industry.

Along with reopening the WyoTech school, Beeman said New Village would start two new manufacturing facilities in Indiana County for production of home-construction materials targeted to individuals who would build their own families’ homes. Beeman also envisions a fabricating site that would convert recycled plastics, computer components and high-tech materials into road paving materials.

Blairsville-area sites for New Village’s fabrication facilities for HouseKit brand construction components and the NewRoad brand line of longer-life, lower-cost asphalt substitutes were not announced. In all, the trade school, HouseKit and NewRoad could create 100 new jobs.

HouseKit has joined a growing number of companies catering to the spiraling interest in do-it-yourselfing in the U.S., while NewRoad attempts to capitalize on the disconnect

between used plastic products being seen as waste but as unsuitable for disposal in landfills with ordinary trash. Education is just one of many paths Beeman has identified as routes to broad economic recovery in the United States and meets with his company’s goal of creating economy-driving jobs.

“We have been operating in the industry of the employers — automotive, trucking manufacturers and service bay operators, for a lot of decades, so we know the employer side extremely well. That will enable us to help the graduates find jobs when they come out.”

“Having watched NVI navigate and overcome numerous challenges over the past 18 months in their efforts to finalize this acquisition, we are committed to connecting them with the county, state and federal resources that will enable them to begin offering classes by the middle of next year,” said Byron Stauffer Jr., executive director of the Indiana County Development Corporation (owner of Corporate Campus) and the Indiana County Office of Planning and Development.



### **Indiana University of Pennsylvania**

IUP, one of the largest and oldest of Pennsylvania’s state-owned universities, endured one of its most difficult and challenging years. While the administration and trustees made important decisions to secure the future of the university, the campus still had much to celebrate.

At the recommendation of President Michael Driscoll, the IUP Council of Trustees enacted the 2020-20215 strategic plan, which “will be the backbone of our work as we strive to make IUP a more student-centered university,” Driscoll said.

The plan is based on three key themes: an “absolute recognition,” according to Driscoll, that being student centered is everyone’s job and responsibility, at the core of everything that defines IUP; IUP will move even more forcefully into the future as a fully student-centered university, to ensure that students will be successful when they leave IUP; a need to embrace our doctoral research mission as a both a distinguishing characteristic of the university and a call to action, that all of our students and faculty are engaged in research that will enhance their understanding of the world, and others’ understanding of the world; and a commitment to creating a community that embraces and values diversity and inclusion for its own sake, as well as central to student success.

In a mission to create the envisioned “IUP NextGen,” Driscoll’s administration team realigned the university’s academic program and addressed needed staffing, which included a reduction of the faculty and staff. Without acting to match costs with revenue, Driscoll said, “IUP will be insolvent within four years. We must act now. “IUP NextGen is a work in progress. We will keep working to build a strong IUP that will continue to transform generations of students to come.”

The university’s accolades in 2020 included recognition of its conversion of 1,500 course sections from in-person to virtual learning in just 10 days in March with the presentation of the “Top COVID Pivot” award from the Pittsburgh Technology Council.

IUP and Westmoreland County Community College reached an articulation agreement allowing acceptance and credit transfer of WCCC students to IUP – a policy expected to bolster and increase overall enrollment.

The university’s Imagine Unlimited capital campaign reached 99 percent of its \$75 million goal by year end, giving confidence that the effort would significantly exceed that target. Imagine Unlimited will enable IUP to step forward as a national leader by transforming the student experience through scholarships, program enhancements, and new and modernized facilities.

IUP won more than \$630,000 from the Department of Defense for scholarships for nine students who are enrolled in concentrated studies in the cybersecurity field.

This is the third consecutive year that IUP students have been selected for this competitive funding, which provides students with full tuition and fees, an annual stipend and funding for books and a laptop.

IUP broke ground this year for construction of a new science and mathematics academic building. Named for the program’s major benefactors, John J. and Char Kopchick Hall will cover almost 143,000 square feet of floor space at a cost of \$90 million.

The building, which will be home to the John J. and Char Kopchick College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and “the epicenter of STEM work at IUP,” is expected to open for the Fall 2023 semester.

Kopchick Hall is designed to be state of the art, flexible, offering both teaching and research labs, and reflecting the best thinking of what will be needed for science teaching and learning for the next 20 years. Leonard Hall and Walsh Hall were leveled to make room for Kopchick Hall.



Indiana University of Pennsylvania has been selected as one of the top 10 colleges and universities in Pennsylvania by “The College Magazine,” a national publication for students wishing to know more about college and university life. In creating the ranking, editors considered academics, student life, notable alumni, location and life after graduation. There are more than 180 colleges and universities in Pennsylvania.

### **Indiana County Technology and Education Center**

A comprehensive plan for creating a diverse education center on the spacious grounds of Indiana County Technology Center, the area’s vocational-technical trade school for high school students and adults, leaped forward in 2020 with the construction of a second facility and groundbreaking for a third took place.



The construction of the new headquarters of Indiana County Conservation District began in December 2019 and was virtually completed this year.

Meanwhile, clearing the design, land leasing and funding hurdles allowed an October groundbreaking for Indiana County Technology and Education Center near ICCD and ICTC. The center will house the Indiana County branch campus of Westmoreland County Community College and has allocated space for future development of the Greater Allegheny Challenger Learning Center for space and science education.

Financing for the ICTEC, to be owned by Indiana County and leased to WCCC, included interim loans from the county commissioners and grants from the federal Appalachian Regional Commission and the state Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP).

With financing and legal documents in place, the WCCC administration announced a 50 percent cut in tuition for Indiana County students who enroll in the community college, an aid program suggested by former Indiana County Commissioner Rod Ruddock in late 2019 as the school’s acknowledgment of the county’s efforts to accommodate the new branch campus.

The two-year college, which charges \$60 per credit for Westmoreland County students, will cut the Indiana County rate of \$120 per credit to match its resident rate. It’s the first such exception to the tuition rates that the college has offered, its leaders said.

“The benefit of that is that students who don’t have trans-



portation and may have wanted to take a college class, or don't have the resources to do that — because there are also scholarships available for those who qualify — it allows them to start a college path,” said WCCC President Tuesday Stanley.

The Challenger center, which has been discussed for nearly a decade, potentially could serve 3,000 students in 187 school districts over 23 counties with specialized STEM or science, technology, engineering and math education.



### **Workforce Development**

The first class of area high school students completed the Indiana County READY certification of their voluntary job application training. Advocated by the Chamber, Indiana PA CareerLink, the county Center for Economic Operations, local school administrators and other partners, the Indiana County READY program prepares future jobseekers in the so-called soft skills – principles of customer service, workplace ethics, communication skills and personal responsibility – that employers seek in new employees in addition to their job skills.

“The key to workforce development is a strong partnership between business and education,” said Jim Kinneer, chairman of the Chamber board of directors. “It is exciting to see the engagement of educators, students and our business community with Indiana County Ready even during these unprecedented times. The chamber looks forward to advancing this initiative in the future.”

### **Economic Recovery**

The county established an extension of the traditional Revolving Loan fund for new and expanding business with an award of \$1.23 million from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for a fund to assist businesses stricken by the pandemic.

In December, the Rustic Lodge in White Township was the first to take advantage of the program and was approved for a four-year loan of \$50,000 at no interest and no payments the first year. Companies may use the funds for payroll, benefits, utilities, rent and inventory, and the fund is open to a broader variety of businesses that are eligible for traditional loans.

First Commonwealth Bank joined the PA CARE Package, a consumer-relief initiative launched by the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General, Bureau of Consumer Protection, to offer payment relief or loan payment deferral to Pennsylvanians who lost their jobs and wages due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Choice Voucher program allocated \$70,210 of aid for the Housing Authority of Indiana County through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

McDonald's restaurants in Indiana and Blairsville will begin a “quick-hire initiative” and are offering at least 60 new employment opportunities for displaced workers, according to a news release. “We are in a very difficult and uncertain time,” said Jason Teal, owner/operator of the four local restaurants. “Because the local economy has taken a major hit, we are announcing this initiative to immediately provide work for those who need it most.”

Indiana County experienced traditional cyclic changes in monthly unemployment rates but, like any other job market, suffered severe increases related to the coronavirus pandemic shutdown. Yet the county noted significant recovery by the year's end.

The monthly rates: December 2019, 6.3 percent; January 2020, 5.6; February, 5.5; March 6.7; April, 15.9; May 13.1; June, 11.6; July, 13.4; August, 9.7; September, 7.6 percent.

### **Rural Broadband**

A campaign to extend high-speed internet access to the least populated and most destitute sections of Indiana County was advanced this year by the county board of commissioners, Indiana County Emergency Management Agency and Indiana County Office of Planning & Development.

The commissioners' approval of several additions to an emergency communication system contract between ICEMA and Salsgiver Telecom Inc. cleared the way for adding several miles of fiberoptic cable and erection of several communication towers to provide high-speed internet service and Wi-Fi connectivity to thousands of homes and businesses in many areas.

The award of federal CARES Act funding enabled the county to carry out the extensions as allowed uses of funding to meet demands for at-home connectivity to workplaces and schools during the COVID-19 outbreak.

First came \$302,000 for service extensions in Brush Valley and Green Townships.

Next was approval of \$1.37 million for the Public Access Broadband project along 67 miles of roads in Conemaugh, Young, Buffington, South Mahoning, East Mahoning, Grant, Rayne and Green townships.

A third extension agreement at a cost of \$239,000 would serve parts of Pine and Cherryhill townships.

The strategy began with the commissioners' commitment of \$1.5 million of local funds coupled with a matching federal grant to design the series of service extensions through a broadband deployment strategy “to determine the delivery methodology and related costs of extending high-speed internet services to rural and underserved areas in Indiana County.”



“We increasingly live in a knowledge-driven economy, making access to high-speed internet essential to our daily lives and economy,” said Byron Stauffer Jr., executive director of the planning office.

At the same time the existing emergency network underwent expansion, Stauffer led efforts by the planning office to pursue extension of service by other commercial internet providers such as Comcast and Kimber in the rest of the county.

Late in the year, the Federal Communications Commission named three internet service providers for the rights to expand broadband service to more than 5,900 homes and businesses in Indiana County as part of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction.

Windstream Services LLC, debtor-in-possession, is getting more than \$12.4 million to cover 4,538 homes and businesses in the county, while Space Exploration Technologies Corp.’s bid of more than \$1.45 million covers 1,240 homes and businesses, and Commnet Wireless LLC’s bid of \$291,526 covers 133 homes and businesses.



### **Business Growth and Milestones**

The Jimmy Stewart Museum continued its evolution as a tribute to the Indiana born Hollywood film star with painting and freshening the look of the facility, but due to the pandemic delayed its planned 25th anniversary celebration this year.

The Ninth Street Deli marked its 20th year of operation by Steve and Richelle McCabe and their family.

Commonplace Coffee opened a new, larger café at Indiana Regional Medical Center, moving out of the kiosk it occupied for more than a decade and into the former IRMC Pantry space, just off of the main lobby.

Tri-Star Motors In & Out Tire and Lube in Blairsville held a ribbon-cutting to introduce its new facility.

The Rustic Lodge in White Township, owned by Joe Lubold, celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Bruno’s Italian Restaurant in Indiana, owned by Dennis Della Penna, observed its 75th year in business.

WDAD-AM, the first radio station licensed to Indiana County, marked 75 years of broadcasting.

Solar United Neighbors hosted the second annual Pennsylvania Solar Congress in Blairsville, a conference of solar owners, supporters and advocates from all over Pennsylvania, for presentations on solar technology, the current solar

landscape and the future for solar energy in the commonwealth. Along with the Indiana County Sustainable Economic Development Task Force, Solar United Neighbors joined in operation of Indiana County Solar Co-op, the group’s most successful solar co-op in the state.

Indiana came under consideration by Minneapolis-based In City Farms as a site for a hydroponics system to raise fish, fruits and vegetables. The borough also was thought of by In City Farms and the Food 21 program for a sustainable food industry in the federally-designated Qualified Opportunity Zone.

Mosquito Joe, a company “dedicated to making outside fun again by eliminating mosquitoes, ticks and fleas from customers’ yards,” has its first foothold in western Pennsylvania, where Sean Reeger, of Home, has a franchise covering Indiana, Johnstown and Greensburg.

Roser Enterprises, of Homer City, marked 40 years in business in 2020. Roser Enterprises is a dealer in architectural salvage, antique truck parts and other used materials to customers around the world, according to Chuck Roser.

After more than 100 years of publication by the Donnelly family, The Indiana Gazette changed hands this year. Indiana Printing & Publishing, also owner of Gazette Printers in White Township, sold The Gazette in July to Sample News Group. Backed by the resources of Sample’s chain of more than 70 community newspapers from Pennsylvania to New England, the administrative and operational efficiencies achieved on a regional level positioned The Gazette to be a stronger publication serving Indiana and one of the flagship papers of the Sample group.

The National Center for Defense Manufacturing and Machining (NCDMM) restructured its organizational operations to include a new holding company and a subsidiary/sister company to support its long-term growth strategy within the global advanced manufacturing industry.

Manufacturing Technology Deployment Group Inc. (MTDG) became the nonprofit parent company of both NCDMM and its new sister, nonprofit company Advanced Manufacturing International Inc. (AMI). NCDMM will remain headquartered in Blairsville, while both MTDG and AMI will be based in Clearwater, Fla. NCDMM delivers innovative and collaborative manufacturing solutions that enhance the nation’s workforce and economic competitiveness.

Mytrysak Family Tree Farm, which took over Fleming’s Christmas Tree Farm on Fleming Road, celebrated its grand opening in July.

The start-up, open-air Indiana County Faire Market was held weekly from July through October at the Indiana County Fox and Coon Hunters Association along Ramsey Run Road in White Township.

1-2-3 Lock and Key cut the ribbon on its new location at 2279 Warren Road in White Township. Under Andrew Gibson, 1-2-3 Lock and Key is a family-owned business that was founded in 2013.

Mutts of Merit LLC opened its new facility at 1279 Philadelphia St., Indiana, and offered force-free canine training and behavior modification.

Anark Sangsub took over as owner of Bann Thai Restaurant in Renaissance Circle along Oakland Avenue, in White Township, and planned to open the Chai Yo Asian Grocery Store in adjacent space at the complex. The store handle goods from Thailand, China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam. Beth's Custom Leather, in Black Lick, celebrated its 40th anniversary in business this year. Store founder Beth Branthoover is a tailor and works mostly with leather, making vests, purses and other items, as well as repairing leather goods.

The Artists Hand Gallery and Espresso Bar in downtown Indiana marked its eighth anniversary of service this year. Sunflower Yoga Studio, owned by Jill Wingerter, celebrated 12 years in business in Indiana.

The Sandwich House in Elderton, marked its 35th anniversary this year. Owned by Greg Frailey, the landmark house-turned-restaurant offers sandwiches, pizza and more and is a favorite of those in the area.

The nonprofit group Solar United Neighbors has announced the relaunch of an Indiana County Solar Co-op to help residents go solar and save.

"Indiana County is an energy county and solar energy is emerging as the next chapter in its history," said Henry McKay, Pennsylvania program director for Solar United Neighbors.

"We are thrilled by the success of the first Indiana County Solar Co-op and see great potential for it to grow even more this time around," said Mark Hilliard, president of the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce.



### Indiana Mall

Late December developments on two fronts sent signals of optimism for the shopping center, as Dunham's sporting goods chain announced it would move into the former Bon-Ton location as a new anchor for Indiana Mall. The same day, longtime mall owner Zamias Services announced the mall would go under new ownership.

Otherwise, Indiana Mall has endured a year that had idled most plans or negotiations by retailers to take space under roof in the mall, according to mall Manager Sherry Renosky.

"We're hopeful for a very good 2021, when projects get back on the table and get started back up. We're known for doing a lot of events and those had to be postponed, and only a few we were still able to do. We have Santa this year, but with a lot of regulations in place."

Recognizing the absence of the food vendors at Indiana County Fair and their potential losses from missing the fair, "The minute the fair was cancelled, I was able to book the bigger names and bigger trucks ... the ones that require more of a setup."

Adapting to the times meant developing outside rather than inside Indiana Mall, and vendors eagerly accepted the offer: Denny & Pearl's pizza and stromboli wagon, from Bloomsburg; Stromboli Land; and the Pie Shoppe, of Westmoreland County, took their turns at Indiana Mall.

They set up one at a time rather than several. Individually, they earned handsome profits as exclusive vendors. Several at once, however, would have constituted a festival in violation of pandemic restrictions.

"It became so popular we had it almost every day from June to the beginning November," Renosky said. "We plan on doing it in 2021 even if the fairs and festivals do come back. Some of them said they want to come back before the fair and festival season gets under way.

"And this helped our tenants out. They had a different place for lunch every day. I had a lot of calls. I had food trucks from Pittsburgh calling and saying 'we hear you're the place to be in Indiana County, can we book?' We had a few of them too.

"Plumville Apple Dumpling & Cobbler came several times. She was shocked at how well they did. She asked if they could come back right before Thanksgiving" so customers could buy cobbler and dumplings and stockpile them for their dinner.

"So, everybody, no matter what industry you were in, had to come up with new ideas and that was ours," Renosky said. "It was a new way of doing things, keeping people safe, but still conducting business. It's about adapting." Some seasonal vendors and kiosks opened before the second wave of the pandemic, including Alpha Productions, Tammy's Shirts & Whatnot's, Evelyn's Heavenly Gifts, Circle K Gifts, Crazy Coffee Lady (coffee, gourmet popcorn, nuts, fudge and candy) and Mary Ann's Country Crafts.

Local photographer Kris Mellinger opened the Photos by Miss Kris Studio and Digital Media Center in the mall early this year to offer formal studio photography, marketing photos, basic camera tutoring and seasonal sessions in addition to her on-site work on senior photos, outdoor sessions, real estate photos and weddings. The digital media service includes transferring images from one medium to another, small video commercials and antique photo restoration. J.C. Penney, which nationally reorganized under bankruptcy and closed many of its stores, kept its long-standing anchor store with the Sephora line and salon in operation.

Traditional retail development for the Mall, however, has taken hiatus but remains on the burner. “Hopefully in the first quarter we’ll know more,” Renosky said.

### **Downtown Indiana**

The return of downtown taverns and restaurants to service, prominent by their sidewalk presence, seemed to anchor a resurgence in commerce for the rest of the Philadelphia Street merchants. Remarkably, in an age of fragile downtown business districts, Indiana didn’t lose a single storefront due to the pandemic, said Linda Mitchell, executive director of the Downtown Indiana Inc. promotion group. “We did have positives this year. Our businesses have been through ups and downs, closings and reopenings, takeout only and every scenario no one imagined before this year,” Mitchell said. “And they have persevered. They have helped each other out. They have helped the community out. And the fact that they all are still standing is incredible.”

The downtown streetscape was marked by the closing of Gatti Pharmacy, which is one of a number of non-chain drugstores that ended business recently.

“But as you go up and down Philadelphia Street, you see the folks that you have always seen there.”

Notable new business ventures in the face of the pandemic are a bicycle shop on North Sixth Street, Casa Jalisco, a Mexican restaurant, and Lemoona, offering Middle Eastern fare, which both opened just before the spring shutdown. Downtown merchants put on a new look, too. China King Restaurant had an extended closing for renovation and pandemic protection. Shane Caylor’s Boomie’s tavern on Philadelphia Street – where his El Tosoro Mexican Restaurant has replaced Firehouse Brewery -- has remodeled as a Voodoo Brewery outlet, and the Lang brothers’ Twisted Jimmy’s on North Seventh Street has rebranded itself as Pig Iron Public House. Along with a pizza restaurant under development on North Eighth Street, their grand opening plans now at the mercy of new year-ending restrictions on the hospitality industry apparently will debut in 2021. “This shows people still have faith in Downtown Indiana,” she said.

Most promotional events and festivities such as the Northern Appalachian Folk Festival and the Westsylvania Blues and Jazz Festival were called off due to coronavirus. Downtown held a modified Halloween parade, and changed the annual Light Up Night parade to a virtual production. Yet Downtown Indiana mounted flower baskets on the light poles during the summer and hoisted a 35-foot-tall Christmas Tree in IRMC park, brought in Santa Claus, with restrictions, for the It’s a Wonderful Life Festival, and promoted the annual Small Business Saturday and Downtown Dollars at the start of the holiday season. “It felt like a huge victory for the morale in Indiana,” Mitchell said.



### **Blairsville**

The borough, the Blairsville Community Development Corporation and the county planning office teamed in the demolition of the former G.C. Murphy Building in at Market and Stewart streets, first in aligning the funding then in coordinating a visioning program to include community input for deciding the future of the high-profile property. In addition to demolition of the Murphy building, community improvement included the grant-funded street renovation project at Old Main and South Liberty streets. Just outside Blairsville, the Chestnut Ridge Golf Resort was sold at auction for \$2.4 million to a Texas development company, demonstrating what area economic development leaders believe is a confidence in the opportunities for growth in the Route 22 corridor through southern Indiana County.

A change in generations marked a change in offerings at a popular hospitality spot in Blairsville.

The Pie Cucina Italian restaurant, operated for since 1983 by Betti Skirboll, closed upon her retirement and reopened in the summer as Iron Alley Saloon by her son, Aaron Skirboll.

Betti posted on Facebook that the family establishment “is transitioning from a new menu that will still have great pizza, salads, sandwiches as well as bar snacks and daily specials.”

Nine years of planning have moved from blueprints to backhoes this year for Blairsville Community Development Authority as the vision for fresh new housing at South Liberty and Brown streets came true with groundbreaking for Sycamore Cottage Development,

“Now we have the first pickle out of the jar!” BCDA Director Linda Gwinn proclaimed.

The 4.5-acre site will feature five small houses sharing a wide green space and a towering sycamore tree.

### **Innovation**

Sarah Boyer and her team at Antria, of White Township, won the grand prize of \$50,000 in the Big Idea Contest promoted by Ben Franklin Technology Partners and the Indiana County CEO.



Six finalists in the competition pitched their concepts, processes or products to a panel of independent judges. This contest, which targeted Indiana, Jefferson, Clearfield and Cambria counties, attracted dozens of emerging innovators, tech startups and small manufacturers pitching an innovation in an attempt to win up to \$50,000. Antria, based along Indian Springs Road, has developed patented stem cell therapies that target wound care applications.

The other four finalists included Gregory Kenning, with White Township-based Nanomagnetic Electronics, who has developed solid-state, heat-integrating sensors that monitor perishable foods, pharmaceuticals and machinery lubricants, and Tanvi Bharathan, with Indiana-based Staff Atom, who is developing a software application that consolidates and simplifies essential tasks for staffing agencies.

“Now more than ever it is so encouraging to see that entrepreneurship is alive and well, and each of these finalists did an amazing job. If this contest is any indication, the future of small business and entrepreneurship in this region is looking bright,” Chamber President Mark Hilliard said.



### Energy Industry

The future of Indiana County’s energy industries grew more tenuous this year as a directive by Gov. Tom Wolf to enter Pennsylvania in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) inched closer to reality. In tandem, Rep. Jim Struzzi and Sen. Joe Pittman worked in their respective houses of the General Assembly for recognition of the burdens that the program would impose on Indiana County area coal mines and electric power plants, their employees and hundreds of families that depend on the keeping the mines and plants open.

The lawmakers fought in committee hearings and in floor debate for the General Assembly to have its own voice in the state’s fate.

As this year comes to a close, the Chamber and our economic leaders have supported our legislators in calling for local residents to testify in the public hearings being held before the implementation of the compact.

### Industrial Parks

Other than the reinvigoration of the WyoTech buildings, little else developed within the county’s inventory of industrial park properties, perhaps due to hesitance by developers to move on significant projects during the COVID-19 outbreak.

FMC exited the Corporate Campus Industrial Park and was quickly replaced by an expansion of Penn Machine Co., a manufacturer of train axles.

The county economic development team continued promotion of the county’s parks and oversaw behind-the-scenes site and utility development to make the parks more attractive to new or expanding businesses.

### Sustaining Tourism

Under constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic mitigation efforts, travel and entertainment were banned, curtailed or discouraged during the year, making the hospitality industry the hardest hit sector of the economy. Indiana County Tourist Bureau shrank its new fiscal year budget to one third of what it was for 2019-20 and worked creatively to market Indiana County to potential visitors. The austerity of the new year includes a waiver of current members’ dues for 2021.

A series of construction projects in the area brought a force of builders and tradespeople who shopped locally and stayed at area hotels. They accounted for the largest numbers of lodging guests in the county.

The Tourist Bureau endorsed the concept of Staycations and promoted Indiana County attractions as destinations for county residents under limited travel options. The bureau highlighted members who were committed to maintaining health and safety guidelines, and heavily promoted local restaurants, shops and member businesses in its digital and social media presences. The county’s parks, trails and other outdoor activities were prime destinations as ones that allowed ease of social distancing.

“Because Indiana County is rural, we were in a better position to attract visitors who wanted to get away from the cities and congestions. Our parks and trails offered a close but rural location from Pittsburg and other larger cities and even other states,” said Executive Director Denise Liggett. The Smicksburg area enjoyed a banner year for visitors.

“With their wide-open spaces and outdoor set-ups, they experienced record-breaking numbers for their September Apple Fest and October Fall Fest. All CDC safety guidelines were followed at these events,” Liggett said. “Adding time in a beautiful Amish country setting and offering a half-day of shopping, and eating a homecooked meal, helps us build itineraries and interest for tour groups.”

Coinciding with the first easing of pandemic restrictions, the Tourist Bureau published a run of 100,000 copies of a new Indiana County visitor guide and fulfilled almost 1,000 requests submitted from social media users. The publication gave Indiana County an advantage over other counties didn’t publish new guides and didn’t compete for travelers’ attention.

“ICTB remains committed to our members and will continue to promote them as we have in the past, and we look forward to the continued partnerships in promoting tourism in the new year,” Liggett said. “We have received numer-

ous phone calls and emails from our members thanking us for waiving the 2021 dues. Some of the businesses who weren't affected have notified us that they are going to pay anyway. They recognize the benefits of being a member of the tourist bureau and don't want us to fail. It has been overwhelming to experience this type of support from members."

### **Indiana Regional Medical Center**

Indiana County's community hospital maintained service to the county and continued its employment levels despite record losses of revenues due to the coronavirus pandemic. Still, IRMC became the center of the county's COVID-19 patient testing program in a partnership with Indiana University of Pennsylvania. A program spearheaded by Dr. Narayanaswamy Bharathan, chairman of IUP's Department of Biology, has resulted in thousands of completed tests, three new staff trained by Bharathan and a new testing procedure being piloted by Bharathan that significantly reduced testing time and costs, while maintaining testing accuracy. "Despite the receipt of federal COVID-19 relief, which was helpful, it didn't cover all losses due to the statewide shut-down and lower volumes of patient care and we still lost significant money," according to spokesman Mark Richards. "Our amazing workforce has continued to keep IRMC in operation even during the shutdown."

And the community support shown to IRMC in return has buoyed the hospital through the virus outbreak.

"The community support has been a huge boost," Wolfe said, recalling "really heartfelt" gestures ranging from "a parade for all fire and police to people delivering personal protective equipment, making face shields and knitting masks, to food being provided to employees."

The medical center partnered with other hospitals to find new levels of efficiency, including the new oncology treatment program that joined the IRMC Cancer Center with UPMC Hillman Cancer Center in Pittsburgh.

"More importantly, the alignment with Punxsutawney Area Hospital in the Pennsylvania Mountain Care Network (PMCN) allows IRMC to develop economies of scale and efficiencies, expanding physician reach to a greater population and meeting health needs for an even larger regional scale," Richards said.

PMCN has one board and a combined executive management team under IRMC CEO Stephen Wolfe.

The initiatives are in line with the IRMC mission.

"We are committed to maintaining Indiana Regional Medical Center as an independent community hospital," said Wolfe. "This is an important move to keep health care local."

The hospital this year also reached agreement with Indiana County Children & Youth Services for the coordination of medical care for children and implementing Plans of Safe Care focused on families and infants touched by drugs. The agreement made Indiana County the first in the state with

a plan for a level of care for "substance affected" children including infants born with an addiction to drugs.

### **Government Liaison**

When and where possible, the Chamber and its partners in economic development, local government and business promoted the county's needs and assets with representatives from state and federal level agencies.

The Mid-Atlantic Region III administrator for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Joseph DeFelice, visited Indiana County on a limited tour of western Pennsylvania and heard local leaders' concerns for the housing market, the decline of manufacturing and the threats to the energy industry.

DeFelice visited the area to promote participating in the Qualified Opportunity Zone designated for much of Indiana Borough.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Community and Economic Development Dennis Davin joined local officials for a tour of the NORMA clamp manufacturing plant near Tunnelton, to learn of the success of the factory, the commitment of the county to support the company and to see the fruits of a \$1 million grant for facility improvements from the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Grant program.

"We look at every single one of them, and review them on behalf of the governor, to look at really good quality economic development projects," Davin said.

"We've made a lot of investment in new technologies to really drive efficiencies in the facility," NORMA plant manager Michael Clark said. "We've started a lean manufacturing journey, focused on running the business ... based on the data, focusing on efficiency and improvement throughout. The workforce here is fantastic. It's a very seasoned workforce. They're very good to work with, they understand how important quality is to our products and they're a very stable, reliable, dependable workforce."



### **Census**

2020 marked the year of the Decennial U.S. Census, and the Chamber joined with local borough and township leaders, the county commissioners and the county planning department in a campaign for awareness and participation in the Census. Funded in part with a share of grant funds from Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic

Development, the Chamber and partners in the Indiana County Complete Count Committee reminded residents of the government funding and programs provided to Indiana County depended on a complete and accurate count of area residents as of Census Day, April 1.

### **Transportation**

Road crews were hard at work throughout Indiana County this year, abiding by constraints of the pandemic mitigation guidelines when required

Township workers, private contractors and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation crews worked to keep area roads and bridges smooth and passable in the local highway network. Prominent among the projects were the ongoing \$20 million widening of Oakland Avenue between Rustic Lodge Road and the Route 422 interchange in White Township, the replacement of bridges on Route 422 in Armstrong Township and the reconstruction of two culverts on Philadelphia Street in Indiana.

On the administrative level, a variety of transportation services such as vehicle registration and driver license renewals were performed online and many deadlines were extended as PennDOT worked to reduce in-person contact during the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Community Revitalization**

Indiana Area School District moved forward with one significant building project this year, the reconfiguration of the entrance to East Pike Elementary School, where the entryway was rebuilt with safety and security features in mind as well as efficiency improvements coming from relocating the reception, principal, counselor and nurse offices.



Pennsylvania Department of Education awarded a grant of \$229,000 which, coupled with an earlier award of \$200,000 from the state Department of Community and Economic Development, will fund construction of a new library and municipal building for Burrell Township on donated land on Main Street in Black Lick.

The township now has most of the cash needed for the putting up a new prefabricated building, install equipment and upgrade the security features. The new library and municipal center will allow expansion of the maintenance center in the building now shared with the township offices.

“Libraries provide invaluable enrichment to our community through both recreational and educational opportunities,”

said Pa. Rep. Jim Struzzi. “The library’s new facilities will allow them to enhance those existing opportunities as well as expand to provide new ones.”

Firefighters from throughout Indiana County joined their counterparts and the townspeople of the Coal Run and McIntyre area to celebrate the completion of a new fire station for Station 290, the Coal Run/McIntyre Volunteer Fire Department. The new five-bay garage covers 6,000 square feet, can shelter half a dozen or more trucks of moderate size and comfortably seat 450 guests for banquets and receptions. It’s fully equipped with a kitchen and a second-level entertainment center.

With an eye toward encouraging new construction and rehabilitation projects for a civic improvement campaign, the Burrell Township board of supervisors began discussion of enacting residential and commercial tax incentives under the state’s Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance program, known as LERTA.

Indiana Borough council began exploration of LERTA incentives that could increase development and sustain continued maintenance of the central business district by new and existing property owners.

The Chevy Chase Community Center in White Township received a tax credit of \$37,500 for the renovation of its facilities, including replacement of the roof, new security doors, re-flooring, window replacement, entryway replacement, replacement of the HVAC system and sidewalk/entry replacement. The center serves more than 10,000 meals a year to the disadvantaged population of Indiana County.

### **Real Estate**

Property sales fell off during the first wave of pandemic restrictions when realtors were idled and property tours were put on hold because of COVID-19. But as the county emerged from restrictions and buying and selling resumed, local agencies recovered to nearly normal levels for the year.

“When we reopened, we were busier than ever. We may be darn close to closing the gap and I equate that to very low mortgage interest rates,” said Associate Broker Elizabeth Hutton of Howard Hanna Real Estate Services. “We see two things. Rates are incredible for anyone who wants to buy. We also see investment by people who are staying home more and making improvements, or who have bought new homes and improving them.”

Not all restrictions were lifted for the real estate business but limits in place have allowed on-site property showings and online financing and processing of sales.

“I would say we have been very lucky as an industry despite being closed down for two months.”

### **Infrastructure**

One of the most understated components of a high quality of life is the unseen network of underground utilities, the water, sewage and drainage systems that provide for a



sanitary and healthy environment, in addition to road work that serves an efficient transportation network.

Indiana County Municipal Services Authority launched its most ambitious community waterline extension project, the \$12 million construction of 18 miles of water mains and lines along Route 119 and 85 to serve Marion Center, Home and other northern Indiana County Communities. The project that began in October, funded by a generous grant of \$10.8 million from PennVEST, will serve 1,080 homes and businesses and include a spur from the Penn Run water system to serve the Spirit Life drug rehabilitation center.

The state awards bring to \$160 million the total of assistance awarded to ICMSA for this and 19 other community water and sewage service projects throughout the county. In southern Indiana County, the Burrell Township Sewer Authority finished the \$10 million overhaul of the sewage treatment plant along Route 119 to meet expected future stringent environmental standards and constructed a new headquarters on the site.

The project was in tandem with the nearby placement of sewage system components in the Josephine area at a cost of \$190,000.

Highridge Water Authority, of Blairsville, reached regulatory accord with Burrell Township and prepared for early 2021 groundbreaking of new water lines to serve the Campbells Mill Road and Falling Run Road area.

Clymer Water Authority this year dedicated the completion of a \$2.5 million project to install a new water storage tank, almost 7,800 feet of main lines and 200 service connections to serve the more than 700 homes and businesses.

In Ernest, the borough's new storm water authority completed an \$800,000 storm containment system meant to protect properties and preserve Store Hill Road from uncontrolled runoff.

A variety of stormwater drainage and underground utility upgrade projects meant excavation on many Indiana Borough streets this year but assured better runoff control and utility service for area residents.

Funded by its entitlement of CDBG money, officials in Center Township this year advanced the work to improve stormwater drainage and paving of Entry Way in Aultman. White Township was awarded a \$250,000 grant by the Commonwealth Financing Authority toward the \$3.4 million installation of about 12,000 feet of sewer lines, install 50 sanitary manholes and a sewage pump station, and provide service to 36 new customers. Construction was set to begin by year end.

Indiana County commissioners earmarked almost \$294,000 of federal community development funds toward the extension of public water service to homes along Metz Road in White Township. The CDBG grant is for the second of a three-phase plan for relieving the growing shortage of well water in the Metz Road and Ferguson Road areas.

Indiana Borough began several grant-funded projects to

improve the First Street retention pond, the South Seventh Street storm sewer replacement and the construction of new storm culverts along South 15th Street.

Indiana also undertook a sanitary sewer line repair job on South Fifth Street in front of Horace Mann School, from School to Washington streets, at an estimated cost of \$40,000; a sanitary sewer line repair project on South 13th from Church to School streets at a cost of \$75,000; and a new battery of smoke tests to help diagnose sewer line inflow problems and plan improvements within constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The borough also contacted for a repair project on the sanitary sewer system along Edgewood Avenue at a cost of almost \$85,000.

In Green Township, the Peg Run Reservoir was awarded a \$230,000 grant to bring the water source into compliance with federal regulations, and for rehabilitation work on the reservoir's concrete spillway to comply with state dam safety rules. The reservoir supplies water to Cherry Tree and the Uniontown area.

The commissioners advanced plans to replace a water system storage tank in Glen Campbell with \$285,000 of undesignated CDBG funds awarded to the county.



### Recreation

The 44-mile-long Ghost Town Trail linking Blairsville and Ebensburg was named Pennsylvania's 2020 Trail of the Year by the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee under the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

"It's a nice honor," Indiana County Parks & Trails Director Ed Patterson said.

"The Ghost Town Trail, like so many rail trails throughout Pennsylvania, captures the spirit of an industrial past and the promise of a recreational future," DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams said. "Again, we see a rails-to-trails conversion spawning economic benefits with establishment of new businesses and increasing patronage at others."

The DCNR selects trails for the honor in its bid to help build enthusiasm and support for both large and small trails, as well as public awareness about the value of the state's trail network.

The county Parks and Trails Department and PennDOT

contracted for the resurfacing of the Hoodlebug Trail between Destiny Church in White Township and the Coral-Graceton area of Center Township at a cost of \$242,000 for a new layer of asphalt and a double seal coat to the present surface of the trail.

White Township officials laid out plans for improvements to a playground and for stormwater drainage improvements at the Recreation Complex along East Pike. The township has pending applications for assistance from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to carry out the estimated \$100,000 playground project and \$200,000 drainage plan.

### **Indiana County - Jimmy Stewart Airport**

In addition to the airport's ongoing active promotion of aviation and its service to local flyers, the airport gained an iconic representation this year. After several years of recovery and restoration work by the local Experimental Aircraft Association, spearheaded by members Harold Wood and Keith Rearick, a twin-engine Cessna 310 plane once owned and piloted by Indiana native actor James Stewart was mounted on a pedestal at the entrance to the airfield. The restored plane is considered a tourism attraction for aviation aficionados and film buffs following the life of Jimmy Stewart.

### **County Improvements**

The county commissioners directed the \$580,000 renovation of a long-standing and multi-purposed government building along North Fourth Street in Indiana to become the new district court for the Indiana area. The building at 350 N. Fourth St. — most recently the home of Indiana County Conservation District — will be remodeled under management of general contractor Fred L. Burns, of Shippensburg, Clarion County. The building, formerly the home of the state Job Center and unemployment claims office, will get a completely new interior and upgraded parking lot to serve as a larger and more secure replacement for the district court now housed in a courthouse annex on Water Street. The commissioners this year agreed to borrow \$15.7 million to help pay for courthouse improvements and to reduce the interest rates and level the annual payments due on existing county debt. The county plans \$10 million of new investment and the immediate repayment of loans taken out in 2018, about \$5.7 million.

The county intended \$750,000 for improvements to the courts, \$100,000 for improvements to the coroner's office, almost \$860,000 for general courthouse improvements and more than \$825,000 for upgrades to the county jail. About \$4.5 million was earmarked as a bridge loan for construction of the WCCC branch campus to be repaid upon expected receipt of RACP grant money.

The commissioners awarded contracts to provide heating, ventilation and air conditioning service improvements for the courts at a cost of \$239,000; for an upgraded emergency

power generator to serve the information technology server center in the courthouse for \$116,000; and to modify some doors and replace some others with automatic door opening equipment in the courthouse and annexes at 801 and 829 Water St. for \$50,000 from the county's CARES Act grant. Indiana Transit moved forward on the construction of a new garage adjoined to its fueling facility along Saltsburg Avenue. ICTA was awarded more than \$80,000 of county funds to assist in its capital project.

Connected with the COVID-19 pandemics, the commissioners approved the erection of a 50-by-80-foot storage facility on the grounds of Indiana County Public Safety Academy, the 35-acre first-responder training center along Fire Academy Road near Tide at a cost of \$231,000 to be paid from federal CARES Act money. Called the COVID warehouse, it will provide storage for personal protective equipment earmarked for emergency responders throughout Indiana County administered by Indiana County Emergency Management Agency. ICEMA Executive Director Thomas Stutzman said the warehouse would be in addition to current space leased by the county and would be for exclusive use of the county for storage of equipment and PPE that is required for our continued response to COVID. The county has neared completion of the new Alice Paul House shelter for domestic crisis and sexual assault victims and has begun occupancy of the larger replacement for the existing shelter.



### **Awards and Honors**

Four Indiana County-based entities were named to the Pennsylvania Business Central's list of the Top 100 Organizations for 2020. After receiving a long list of nominees from the magazine's 23-county readership, these organizations were selected by an editorial committee based on their positive impacts in the business community of central Pennsylvania.

Those recognized are the Center for Economic Operations (CEO), the partnership of the Chamber, the county commissioners, Indiana County Development Corporation, IUP and Indiana County Tourist Bureau; S&T Bank; First Commonwealth Bank; and UpStreet Architects.

"This year's Top 100 Organizations list is made up of leaders in their chosen fields, bringing new ideas, technology and services to their counties and spheres of influence," the



magazine said. “With the unpredictability of various markets and the ever-changing fiscal landscape of our country, these organizations have shown that smart business practices and shrewd decision-making can make all the difference in surviving unforeseen obstacles. They are examples of not only survival in difficult times, but of excelling through adversity.”

Others on list that have a presence in Indiana County are Johnstown-based 1st Summit Bank, Johnstown-based Dale Oxygen, Clearfield-based CNB Bank, Harrisburg-based PSECU and Altoona-based Sheetz.

Pennsylvania Business Central, the midstate chronicle of all levels of commerce and industry, named eight Indiana County executives to the Top 100 people in the region: Todd Brice, CEO of S&T Bank; Thomas Harley, leader of UpStreet Architects; Denise Liggett, executive director of Indiana County Tourist Bureau; Linda Mitchell, executive director of Downtown Indiana Inc.; T. Michael Price, CEO of First Commonwealth Financial Corporation; Joe Reschini, president of Evergreen Insurance; Becky Stapleton, senior VP and chief banking officer at S&T Bank; and Karen Welsh, a founder of UpStreet Architects.

Though not an Indiana native, also named to the list was Jane Grebenc, president of First Commonwealth Bank. PBC also selected four Indiana County area professionals for the list of the Top 30 Under 30 in the region. Those recognized are Lindsey Jones, an independent living specialist with JusticeWorks YouthCare in Indiana County; Molly Kathleen Sarver, senior land use planner with the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development; Shawn Steffee, the assistant branch manager at S&T Bank’s North Fourth Street branch in Indiana; and James Gregg, owner of Smithmyer’s Superette in Loretto, Cambria County.

At least three professionals with Indiana roots are among 42 named by Pennsylvania Business Central as its “Foremost Under 40” for 2020. The magazine recognized Indiana attorney Katherine A. Haberl-Thomas, Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art site supervisor Hannah Harley and Daniel E. Fleming, an insurance adviser with The Reschini Group in Indiana.

Mike Vuckovich, the superintendent of the Indiana Area School District for two years, is one of 24 of his kind — up-and-coming school administrators on the job for less than five years — who were named among America’s “Superintendents to Watch” for 2020. The National School Public Relations Association selects superintendents “who demonstrate dynamic, fast-paced leadership with strong communication at its core. They use communication technology in innovative and effective ways to engage and inform their school communities and to expand two-way communication and outreach efforts.”

Vuckovich, who has championed the reach, speed and efficiency of the internet and digital technologies to advance the school district, engineered an overhaul of the district’s website and laid out Indiana’s game plan for capitalizing

on social media to reach parents, taxpayers, teachers and students with the district’s latest news. That tech savvy played out this year as the coronavirus pandemic swept the nation, and Vuckovich directed the district’s use of online communication technology tools to keep the district moving forward.

He is the only superintendent from Pennsylvania among the honorees this year.

The Hilton Garden Inn Indiana at IUP on being recognized by the Hilton Corporation as a recipient of the 2019 Conrad Achievement Award. Of the 738 hotels eligible for the award, the Hilton Garden Inn Indiana ranked in the top 20 in Total Quality Score. Also receiving an award was Angela Kellar, its director of sales, who received the Hilton Corporation’s Sales Leader of the Year Award for North and South America.



### **The Chamber of Commerce**

When the pandemic began, the Chamber and partners in the CEO immediately planned for its end and the county’s economic recovery. The Chamber surveyed members and other Indiana County businesses in all sectors for needs that required attention, their use of COVID-19 assistance programs and the hurdles they continued to face. Being a clearinghouse for information became a top role.

The Chamber provided expertise to area small businesses as they navigated the safety net of government financing and aid for surviving the coronavirus pandemic. Our Chamber staff was on call to help entrepreneurs apply for help through The Progress Fund, Bridgeway Capital, the Northside Community Development Fund and the Reinvestment Fund, which offered assistance for operating expenses during shutdown, and technical assistance and training for business stabilization and reopening.

The Chamber introduced a twice-weekly news bulletin, Indiana County Road to Recovery, with resources for businesses related to the COVID-19 pandemic including financial opportunities (information related to loans and grants), information to keep businesses and employees safe (where to find masks, sanitizer and cleaning services) and dates of upcoming events throughout Indiana County, both in person and virtual. The chamber began a Social Distance Dining Club that focused on a different local restaurant in each bulletin, along with a menu and contact information.



As state-imposed regulations were eased, the Chamber went to bat for Indiana County businesses to gain clarification of ambiguous rules and restrictions.

The Chamber itself endured constraints of the pandemic and considered monthly whether to normally conduct, adapt to online or postpone its busy schedule of member-service programs and events such as the Business Hall of Fame induction. The 2020 class of inductees features six individuals who will join the ranks of the business elite represented throughout Indiana County's history: Frank Gorell, R. Hastie Ray, John Glass, Fred Musser, Christine Toretta and Patrick Stapleton Jr. They will be inducted into the hall of fame at a ceremony tentatively scheduled for early June at the Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex.



Other Chamber events touched by the pandemic included the inaugural golf outing, Indiana County Women's Summit, Think About Energy Briefing, monthly Business After Hours and Chamber Check-In networking events (replaced by online Coffee Talk sessions on Zoom), Pint for a Pint Blood Drive, Brains and Grains

and Lunch Mob at Hilton Garden Inn,

The Chamber teamed with the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) and the County Office of Planning and Development on a Federal Opportunity Zone Seminar that is tentatively scheduled for late May in Indiana County. Federal Opportunity Zones (FOZs) are designated areas in a community where private investments on real estate, under certain conditions, may be eligible for capital gains tax incentives.

Recovery from the pandemic enabled the Chamber to conduct the mid-summer Indiana County Shop Local Week along with the Chamber Cash promotion to encourage shopping at member retailers.

The Chamber frequently provided platforms for local government officials and elected officials to reach the business community and the county as a whole. The yearly Eggs and Issues breakfast brought state and federal elected officials to answer Chamber members' questions about the issued. The Chamber partnered with the county commissioners for their inaugural online state-of-the-county message. And the Chamber welcomed candidates for state legislative seats for the Candidates Night Forum held online in advance of the Nov. 3 election.

The chamber again enjoyed a year of partnership with like-minded elected officials for the advancement of Indiana County and its people.

The chamber welcomed Michael Keith and Robin Gorman, newly elected to the Indiana County board of commissioners, along with Sherene Hess to our efforts along with Sen. Joe Pittman, Rep. Jim Struzzi, Rep. Jeff Pyle and until his election to the state Senate in November, Rep. Cris Dush.



As the year came to a close, the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce celebrated its 108th year in business, rallied its members for ongoing recovery from the burdens and challenges laid upon them by the COVID-19 pandemic, and offered encouragement for not only surviving but thriving in post-coronavirus years.

Chamber Chairman Jim Kinneer, the board's leader the last two years, welcomed Vice Chairman Steve Drahnak to take the reins for a two-year term starting Jan. 1. Dave Reed will succeed Drahnak as vice chairman.

Kinneer counted the Indiana County Ready soft-skills advocacy program for area high school students, the revision of the chamber's membership dues structure and the chamber's first women's summit as hallmarks of his term. Due to the pandemic, the chamber's annual luncheon took the form of an online meeting with a business agenda and keynote remarks by Jeffrey Tobin, former owner of Henry Hall Office Products and an ex-Verizon franchisee in Indiana, who now makes a name and career as a coach and motivational speaker for events around the globe.

Two keys that he offered business leaders for rebuilding their organizations following the havoc wreaked by the pandemic are to abandon the past and be selective about moving forward.

"For your own business, for your own life, I'm asking you to have a mental tsunami and to consider for yourself, for your organization, for your business, what would happen if you had 20 minutes to grab the most important things that you have?" Tobin challenged his audience. "What new mission might you have?"

"What kind of future can you build for your company or your life? Look to the future where you give up the stuff that wasn't necessary, devise your own future and some amazing things can happen for you."





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