

FOCUS ON BERKS COUNTY BUSINESS



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Furniture Soup is celebrating its 15th year in business. This Reading-based interior design and office furniture company helps their commercial clients construct creative, efficient and affordable office interiors. Designing with just the right blend of new, remanufactured and pre-owned office furniture and cubicles, Furniture Soup assists clients from the beginning concept of a project, through the detail planning, budgeting and final fit out.

Furniture Soup's dedicated staff are planners, designers, logistics experts, budget-minders, project managers, installers and movers. For projects both small and large, problem solving is their specialty.

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Browse their gallery of past projects at <http://furnituresoup.com/gallery>; Or drop by their showroom for a look around at what's new, and at what's pre-owned! 1031D MacArthur Road, Building 2, Reading, PA 19605. Open M-F 9 AM-5 PM. Phone: 610.926.8700.

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Klein Transportation is one of the few bus companies in the area that has been family owned and operated for over 60 years. Those who pass by our location on Ben Franklin Highway/422 in Douglassville find it hard to miss our motorcoach fleet in the middle of the divided highway. Many are not aware we also have a full school bus fleet servicing both public and private schools and private charter in the tri-county area.

Klein provides both charter and tour services. Corporate clients, colleges and universities, senior living facilities and private clubs and organizations often charter with Klein to travel to their determined destinations. Klein also offers a day and overnight tour calendar, full of exciting destinations where individual passengers may be looking to travel for pleasure individually or with a few friends or family members.



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Storage World

Founded in 1998 alongside a wooded back road in Sinking Spring known as Morgan Drive, Storage World currently owns and operates multiple storage facilities throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

In March of 2017, construction began on our 11th location in Exeter, PA, which is slated to open this July. Our newest location is temperature and humidity controlled. We have numerous sizes available to meet your needs, and the entire building will have high security access control and video surveillance.

Storage World aims to provide all our customers with a positive experience. We are a straight forward, no nonsense, self-storage operator.

Recent implementation of new technology allows the option to review unit size, availability, and pricing online from the comfort of your home or office. Once you have found the right size, you have the option to reserve or rent the space from your smart phone, tablet, or computer. If you complete an online rental you will have access to the space within minutes. Your free



high security lock and move in packet will be waiting for you in your storage unit. As an added convenience, new customers receive extreme discounts towards moving truck or van rentals.

We take pride in providing quality, clean, and convenient self-storage. We have automated access, video surveillance, and 24-hour rental and payment centers, that can assist customers after hours and on weekends.

Most locations feature standard drive-up units, and select locations have climate and humidity-controlled space. Most sites have outdoor parking spaces, so if you are tired of having your boat or RV in your driveway, we can help. At select locations, we feature XL storage units, so you can store your boat or motorhome indoors.

All our locations have moving truck or van rentals and a full line of moving and packing supplies available!

Advanced Manufacturing in Berks County

Manufacturing remains Berks County's largest industry sector by economic output and by employment with over 31,000 jobs (17.5% of local employment). Berks County's more than 500 manufacturing establishments provide jobs that pay, with average annual earnings of more than \$56,000 per year. The above average benefits packages that accompany manufacturing jobs increase average total compensation to more than \$75,000 per year. Investments in advanced manufacturing technology and productivity improvements supported steady wage growth over the past decade and above average wage growth is expected to continue going forward.

Most Berks County manufacturers find current business conditions to be favorable and the sector continue to add jobs at a modest rate. Layoffs among Berks County manufacturing workers are at historically low levels. Skilled manufacturing technicians in particular are in great demand with plentiful employment options.

(Continued on page 18)

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(Continued from page 17)

Continued productivity growth will likely allow the Berks County manufacturing sector to retain its position as the region's leading sector in economic output for the next decade. However, these same productivity improvements will mitigate job growth in the sector. At the same time, the ever-changing shop floor environment will require workers with increasing education and skills. The Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) expects that a thriving advanced manufacturing sector will still employ approximately 30,000 workers in 2025.

Berks County manufacturing employers face unprecedented demographic changes and skills shortages. Quite simply, the 31,000 workers who make up Berks County's experienced manufacturing workforce continue to age and many are approaching retirement or retiring at an alarming rate: 54 percent of incumbent workers in the sector are age 45 or older and 25 percent are age 55 and older.

As a result, the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) projects that

local manufacturing employers will need to hire at least 6,000 skilled and semi-skilled replacement workers by the end of 2025. At the same time, these employers will need to up-skill new entrants as well as their existing employees in order to remain internationally-competitive. Particular attention must be paid to developing critical technical skills in industrial maintenance (mechatronics), precision machining, welding technology and quality systems which make up an increasing share of essential skills in the modern advanced manufacturing workplace. In fact, the viability of many semi-skilled production and other manufacturing jobs depend directly on employer success in attracting, training and retaining skilled technicians. Employer judgments about their ability to find and develop the skilled talent they need will impact their expansion planning decisions regarding capital investment in technology. Simply put, companies will not invest in plants and equipment that they cannot effectively operate and maintain.

The current reality is that most semi-skilled and entry-level production workers lack the technical skills needed to advance

into higher-paying technical positions without additional education and training. As a result, these individuals may lack employment security in a changing technology-driven environment and could be at risk for job elimination or forced replacement. While not all production workers need to acquire higher level technical skills, more and more will need to do so if their employers are to thrive and expand. In addition, many skilled manufacturing technicians are challenged to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to stay current with increasing-sophisticated and integrated advanced manufacturing equipment and systems.

This manufacturing demographic and skills problem has been decades in the making and local employers, especially small-medium size firms, cannot solve it with their own resources. As a forward thinking job retention, layoff aversion and economic development strategy, the Berks WDB supports a return to the historical practice of capitalizing on incumbent worker technical training to build advanced manufacturing worker competencies, while matching newly-entering talent with experi-

enced employees for knowledge transfer. Individual production and maintenance workers will benefit by avoiding future job losses and attaining broad-level employment security in the sector. In cases where up-skilled workers do become dislocated, the enhanced technical skills provided by such training will enable them to be more quickly reemployed in similar well-paying jobs at other more successful local manufacturers. (Source: Berks County Workforce Development Board)

Berks Association Provides Big Benefits to Small Business

Small Business owners in Berks will be excited to hear about the recent launch of the Small Business Resource Association, a service organization created to support small business through a variety of hands on services, benefits and cost-effective resources that deliver "connections for success."

Thank You! To our Customers, Employees, Greater Reading and Berks County and all the communities we serve.

We would not place on the Chamber list year after year without your support.

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Gary Seibert, business consultant and president of the SBR Association, realized a common need among many of his clients owning small businesses — a lack of time and resources to help them navigate through their day-to-day challenges that are threatening their business success. "So many small businesses struggle because of fundamental mistakes made early on in their business plan," says Seibert. "They are usually very skilled in the type of work they do, but they lack the background and experience in running a business," he adds.

The Small Business Resource Association provides a variety of resources such as technology resource help, HR and staffing solutions, business expansion strategies, legal and accounting support and strategic marketing planning. Unique to the Association's structure is the "Pitch and the Huddle," two services that help entrepreneurs launch and grow their business. In addition, the SBRA will place a focus on the employee and their family. Last but not least, is the ability to provide its members with savings on all types of insurances, including what every business needs — affordable health insurance.

The Small Business Resource Association is accepting members at its offices at 2395 Lancaster Ave. in Shillington. More information is available at sbrassociation.org.

Berks Digital Inc.

Gary and Elaine Brown founded Berks Digital Inc. in 2005, with a focus on maturing digital printing technologies, which have changed the printing industry. Starting in the basement of their Muhlenberg township home they quickly outgrew the home business. In 2008 they moved operations to their current location at 2620 Hampden Boulevard, Reading PA. In 2010 Berks Digital acquired a competing company that focused on the "Large Format" market and 2017 marked the 12th consecutive year of sales growth for the firm. 2017 also was the seventh consecutive year that Berks Digital placed on the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance Entrepreneurial growth list.

"This year we've upgraded our digital color press for expanded service and quality," said Gary Brown, partner at Berks Digital. With continued investment in automation technologies they have been able to offer both large and small companies fast turnaround times on high quality digitally printed materials at competitive prices.

Berks Digital can take on large production print, sign and banner orders, producing thousands of high quality pieces for large companies in a few days. "We've been able to prove that we can meet the needs of big business, when we get to speak to the right person in these companies the value we provide is pretty clear" said Gary Brown.

Berks Digital offers small format printed materials that businesses use, such as brochures, flyers, postcards and much more. Large format printing includes banners, pop-up displays, fine art reproductions and store signage.

With a focus on quality and customer service, Berks Digital has both national and local customers that rely on their expertise to make their print buying pleasant and affordable.

For additional information, please call 610.929.1200 and visit www.berksdigital.com.



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