

# BERKS COUNTY BACK TO BUSINESS

## Berks County Commissioners, GRCA Launch Rebuild Berks Recovery Plan

**As Berks County reopens, resources and information will be made available.**

The Berks County Commissioners and Greater Reading Chamber Alliance have joined forces to launch “Rebuild Berks — Keep Business Local. Watch Berks Thrive.”

The partnership between GRCA and the Berks County Commissioners — Christian Y. Leinbach, Kevin S. Barnhardt, and Michael S. Rivera — will help every Berks County resident and local business owner access the resources they need to succeed as the region reopens following the economic shutdown from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Reopening and recovering safely following COVID-19 requires a team effort and we are pleased to announce our partnership with the Berks County Commissioners during our Rebuild Berks plan,” said GRCA’s President and CEO Jim Gerlach. “While the pandemic has brought many unexpected challenges and hardships to our community members and small businesses, we are prepared to rise from this experience stronger and more united. Together, we are greater.”

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) is a 501(c)(3) with a mission to

connect businesses with the resources that allow them to become bigger, better, and more efficient and the Berks County Commissioners constitute the chief governing body of the County.

“We can all do our part in acting together to ensure the successful reopening of the county that we call our home,” said Berks County Commissioners Chair Christian Leinbach. “When we all work together, big things happen and we are excited to see what our partnership with GRCA on the Rebuild Berks initiative will bring.”

The Berks County Commissioners and GRCA recognize that there is a need for consumers and businesses to shop local and source from local suppliers and manufacturers in order to help Berks County thrive. With the launch of the Rebuild Berks initiative, information and resources will be readily available for those seeking to support local, enroll their employees in safety trainings, and continue to protect the health and safety of those in the community.

For further information, please contact Stephanie Weaver, Public Relations Officer, at [sweaver@countyofberks.com](mailto:sweaver@countyofberks.com) or 610.816.1242, or Leah Fassnacht, Director of Communications & Marketing, at [lfassnacht@greaterreading.org](mailto:lfassnacht@greaterreading.org) or 610.898.7780.



**KEEP BUSINESS LOCAL.  
WATCH BERKS THRIVE.**

**REBUILD  
BERKS**  [rebuildberks.com](http://rebuildberks.com)

Brought to you by the Berks County Commissioners in partnership with the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance.

## Local businesses encouraged to sign and implement the ‘Berks County Commitment’

As a continuation of the “Rebuilding Berks” initiative and the “Stop the Spread” campaign and in anticipation of Berks County entering the Green Phase of reopening, the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) and Pennsylvania’s Americana Region recently introduced the “Berks County Commitment.” This commitment also has received full support of the Berks County Commissioners.

GRCA and Pennsylvania’s Americana Region, the Visitors Bureau representing Reading and Berks County, recognize that consumer comfort will play a huge role in putting Berks County businesses on the road to recovery. In signing the Berks County Commitment, businesses will provide their consumers and customers a clear and unequivocal commitment to follow. Those guidelines include aggressive cleaning protocols, health surveys for staff prior to their shift, special training, and using personal protective equipment when possible. In return, businesses ask

employees and customers to follow recommended guidelines, which include following social distancing guidelines and not visiting if feeling sick.

“The Berks County Commitment showcases the continued dedication of our area businesses to protecting the health and safety of their employees and customers,” said Jim Gerlach, GRCA President and CEO. “By making this commitment, businesses are indicating their intention to follow and implement all of the advanced local, state, and federal guidelines to ensure we continue to stop the spread of the virus and get back to normal.”

The Berks County Commitment grew out of looking at the success of similar programs such as the “Pocono Promise” from the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau and the “Vow of the Valley” launched by the Lehigh Valley Chamber. Businesses are asked to sign the Berks County Commitment here.

*(Continued on page 12)*



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## Reading CollegeTowne: Powered by O'Pake



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What does it mean to be Powered by O'Pake? Alvernia University's O'Pake Institute for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship is a change agent for the economic and entrepreneurial outlook of Reading. The O'Pake Institute acts as a catalyst for economic and organizational growth by mentoring businesses through a student-powered approach, and actively partnering with other economic development drivers.

The O'Pake Institute's Business Incubator services entrepreneurs and small businesses through an integrated network of students, staff, mentors and partners. The Institute provides clients the services and support needed to launch and grow their ventures. Currently, O'Pake serves 15 for-profit and nonprofit businesses in the areas of business planning, business development, communications, branding, funding, social media marketing, public relations, research, strategic planning, website design and intellectual property management.



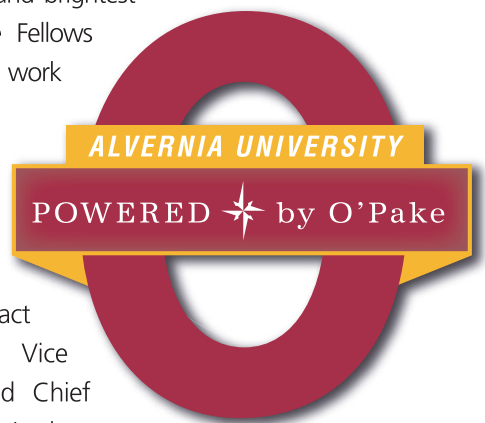
Dr. Rodney Ridley, Alvernia's Vice President, Associate Provost and COO of the O'Pake Institute for Economic Development and Entrepreneurship, with Fellows in downtown Reading.



Alvernia President John R. Loyack and Vice President, Associate Provost and COO of the O'Pake Institute Rodney Ridley announce O'Pake shift to economic development and entrepreneurship.

The service model uniquely centers around a student-powered approach as O'Pake recruits Alvernia's best and brightest students to work in the O'Pake Fellows Program. At this time, 15 fellows work hands-on with clients, receive real-world experiential learning opportunities and provide quality services to local businesses.

Businesses interested in being Powered by O'Pake, can contact Dr. Rodney Ridley, Alvernia's Vice President, Associate Provost and Chief Operating Officer for the O'Pake Institute at [rodney.ridley@alvernia.edu](mailto:rodney.ridley@alvernia.edu) or Michelle R. Lehman, MBA, Director of Student and Client Services at [Michelle.lehman@alvernia.edu](mailto:Michelle.lehman@alvernia.edu).



[www.alvernia.edu/opake](http://www.alvernia.edu/opake)

# BERKS COUNTY BACK TO BUSINESS

## BERKS COUNTY COMMITMENT

(Continued from page 10)

"Survey statistics from USA Travel and Miles Media have shown that convention and visitors bureaus are one of the top trusted resources for destination information when planning to travel. In today's environment, visitors will look to Pennsylvania's Americana Region's Visitors Bureau for what they can expect from our hotels, restaurants and attractions for cleanliness and safety. We are proud of our partners and their commitment to implement the necessary precautions to keep our visitors and residents safe. Together, we are committed to making everyone's experience exceptional and memorable," said Crystal Seitz, President of Pennsylvania's Americana Region.

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) is a 501(c)(3) and Pennsylvania's Americana Region is a 501(c)(6). GRCA and Pennsylvania's Americana Region make no guarantees with respect to the ultimate effectiveness of the Berks County Commitment program and assumes no responsibility for assuring compliance by any business with such guidelines.



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**5**

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## EB Designs LLC - Liz Hafer

EB Designs LLC, established in 2016 as a full-time endeavor, is a local Berks graphic design company offering print, web and social media design solutions for the innovative. With over 19+ years of experience in the design field and years in the community, Liz prides herself on not only being a local small business, but giving back to other local small businesses and the community wherever possible. From co-op projects such as the inaugural "Giving Back 2 Berks Small Business" give away introduced during the pandemic, offering Small Business yard signs for purchase to show support within the community, to utilizing local suppliers, printers, and vendors for her clients' needs wherever possible, she is a firm believer in supporting small business and understanding to "we are all in this together."

Now in her fifth year of business, EB Designs continues to work primarily with local small businesses and non-profits in Berks County and beyond, including Children's Home of Reading; Berks County Monument Preservation Fund; and Pointman Ministries. Liz is very passionate about working with small business and non-profits as she enjoys helping them grow by providing the right marketing tools to be successful. She is 100 percent committed to her clients, from concept to completion, and clients can expect first-hand interaction and support from her even after the project is done. Liz wants to see small businesses succeed, no matter the circumstances! For a full list of services visit [www.eb-designs.com](http://www.eb-designs.com).

In addition to EB Designs, Liz also leads the Berks Women in Motion networking group. Founded in 2017, Liz took over

leadership in October of 2019 and hit the ground running on a mission in getting the group in motion, together and building relationships outside of the 30-second introductions. The group is comprised of a wide variety of empowering local women in business who are very community driven. The energy is unlike any other! The goal of BWIM is to bring together successful businesswomen and community leaders in the Berks County area who are looking to expand their connections, further build relationships within the community and support one another with business referrals.

Liz has expanded the group with various networking opportunities, volunteering, and fun team building activities. Due to the pandemic, the group has continued to meet by moving their meetings and roundtable discussions to a digital platform and have recently begun introducing other activities to see each other in person while practicing safe distancing best practices. For more information on BWIM, visit <https://berkswomeninmotion.square.site>. Offering a membership free networking group, in a carefree environment and flexible commitment to attend events, BWIM is ideal for any busy businesswoman.

For additional information, please visit [www.eb-designs.com](http://www.eb-designs.com) or contact Liz Hafer at [liz@eb-designs.com](mailto:liz@eb-designs.com) or 610.406.5414.

EB Designs LLC is Located in Temple, PA.



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## Berks Career & Technology Center

Berks Career & Technology Center (BCTC) is proud to announce the completion of the Advanced Welding and Metal Fabrication Training Center. The four-million-dollar, state-of-the-art facility, opening in August 2020, houses 42 brand new welding booths, a welding robot and rigging apparatus.

Welding is used in many industries including construction, manufacturing, aerospace, petroleum, agriculture, and the military. Due to this fact, welding is an essential part of the U.S. economy. Local and regional employers have a strong need for skilled, certified welders.

Students in the BCTC Welding Technology program learn the welding standards established by the American Welding Society (AWS). Students will learn to fabricate or repair metal using electric arc welding. Students also receive training in shielded metal arc welding, gas metal arc welding and gas tungsten arc welding, as well as oxyacetylene cutting/welding. Students will also have hands on experience using pulse welding technology and a CNC controlled plasma table to create projects.



Adults seeking a career in welding can choose from three unique training opportunities. Day and evening classes are available and students with exceptional financial need can receive up to \$6,345 in federal financial aid.

BCTC adult education also offers customized training for business and industries needing to upskill their employees.

For more information about starting a rewarding career as a welder, go to [berkscareer.com/ACE](http://berkscareer.com/ACE) or call 610.743.7630.

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 414 W. Main Street  
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 414 W. Main Street,  
 Lansdale, PA 19446

# BERKS COUNTY BACK TO BUSINESS

## Kantner's Tire Service

As a tire business, Kantner's was considered essential during the stay-at-home order related to COVID-19. Never in the 43 years of ownership and operation did Kantner's experience anything like this. Navigating the business to ensure safety of our employees and customers as well as continuing to provide the high level of service our customers have come to expect had some challenges. Sanitizing practices, changes to waiting area, and adjusting the interactions with customers were implemented. Store hours were slightly reduced. It was a different landscape for the shop, but the team worked together as they do on a daily basis, and the business continued with the support of the community that we serve. Now that things have gone "green," we are back to operating under our normal hours with the safety measures in place and business is booming as it did pre-pandemic. Here is Kantner's story —

Kantner's Tire Service, Inc. is a family owned and operated tire sales and service business located in the town of Shoemakersville, PA. Glenn Roberts was initially



hired by Paul Kantner in April 1974 to learn the business with the goal of purchasing the shop within ten years. Glenn and his wife, Jane, officially purchased Kantner's, which consisted of two garage bays and a tire warehouse, in March of 1977. In 1990, the business expanded to include an additional bay, a warehouse, office and waiting room. In 1994 and 2000, respectively, Troy and Todd (Glenn and Jane's sons), joined the business on a full-time basis and are now vice presidents within the corporation. Trevor Roberts (son of Troy) started full time after graduating high school in 2013 and marks the 3rd generation working in the business. Kantner's service team consists of the following additional employees: Rodney Hollenbach, Dustin Kistler, Dustin Kunkle, Brandon Fry, Brett Kline, Andrew Smith, Andrew Fry, and Heidi Roberts.



Three generations of the Roberts family involved in the business (Left to Right: Trevor Roberts, Troy Roberts, Todd Roberts, and Glenn Roberts).

We provide tire sales and service for passenger and light truck, commercial truck, the agricultural community, as well as small garden tractor, ATV and anything in between. We also offer on-site and roadside commercial and agricultural tire service within a 60-mile radius. Our business is built on the foundation of providing our

customers efficient and exceptional service. We are grateful for the loyal patronage of our customers, especially during the uncertainty of the pandemic, and will continue to provide quality service for many years to come.

For additional information, please call 610.562.2567 and visit [www.kantnerstire.com](http://www.kantnerstire.com).



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## 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.

"Last year we 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 businesses. 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](http://www.berksdigital.com).

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