

Magic Meets Motivation at GRCA's Annual Dinner

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) last night celebrated the vitality of the Berks County business community at its 112th Annual Dinner held at the Santander Arena.

Nearly 700 people gathered for the Las Vegas-themed event.

The evening began by instantly transporting attendees to the glitz and glamour of the Vegas Strip. VIP Sponsors were treated to an exclusive experience, complete with signature cocktails, gourmet hors d'oeuvres and a photo opportunity with the legendary Penn Jillette. As other guests arrived, they were welcomed by glamorous showgirls and offered sparkling wine, setting a festive tone for the night. The excitement continued with lively photo opportunities featuring a vintage convertible and an Elvis impersonator.

During Jillette's 40-minute interactive speech in which multiple audience members helped during his tricks, he spoke about how he and Teller wanted to do magic differently.

"Magic is always claiming it can do something you can and laughing at you about it," he said.



Instead, he and Teller wanted to build trust and be honest with their audience, much like businesses need to with their customers.

"Magic doesn't fool you because you are stupid," he said. "It fools you because it is stupid."

He said there is beauty in the "aha moment," that should be celebrated, and that is one of the reasons he and Teller are the longest running show in Las Vegas history.

The evening continued with recognizing the 50 companies that made up the Business Excellence Awards in Category 1. American Crane & Equipment Corpo-



ration, Reading Truck Equipment, LLC and Vision Mechanical, Inc. took the top three spots. The honored businesses in Category 1 are for-profit companies, with revenues of at least \$1 million in each of the past three fiscal years.

Ten smaller businesses were recognized in Category 2 with FXV Digital design, Our Konnection, LLC and Financial Planning Advisors, Inc. making the top three. The recognized companies in Category 2 are for-profit businesses, with revenues of at least \$250,000 in each of the past three fiscal years.

"The Dinner was more than just a finely curated and magical celebration—it was a vibrant reflection of the spirit and strength of the Greater Reading business community," said Kristi Gage-Linderman, vice chairwoman of the board. "From the moment guests arrived, the energy was electric, but what truly lit up the room was the shared pride in our local entrepreneurs and business leaders. Their success fuels our economy, strengthens our community and inspires a brighter future."



The Title Sponsor of the event was JPMorgan Chase & Co. and the Platinum Sponsor was Shuman Development Group.

ABOUT THE GREATER READING CHAMBER ALLIANCE: Our mission is with excellent and committed leadership and coordination, we: attract new businesses to our community, support the businesses that are already here, nurture local start-ups, develop the workforce for today and the future, and advocate on behalf of the business community.

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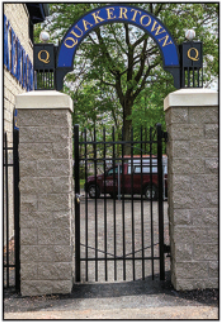
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2024 STATE OF THE BERKS COUNTY ECONOMY

The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) is proud to share the latest insights into the region's economic performance with the release of the 2024 Berks County State of the Economy Report. Developed in collaboration with the Lancaster EDC's Center for regional Analysis, the report provides a comprehensive snapshot of key trends shaping the local economy, from employment and wages to housing, demographics and more.

This annual update serves as a valuable resource for business leaders, policymakers and community stakeholders seeking to better understand the opportunities and challenges influencing growth in Berks County.

Economic Growth Highlights

In 2024, Berks County experienced steady progress across several key economic indicators, including increases in gross domestic product (GDP), employment and average earnings.

- Manufacturing remains the cornerstone of the local economy, leading all

sectors in both GDP contribution and employment. Average wages in the sector exceed the countywide average by more than \$10,000 per year.

- The Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities sector experienced the largest percentage increase in employment from 2019 to 2024.

- Berks County recorded its fourth consecutive year of employment growth, with an average of 211,200 people employed throughout 2024.

- The county's unemployment rate dropped to an annual average of 3.7%, tying the all-time low last seen in 2023.

(Continued on page 12)

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(Continued from page 11)

• Although wages did not keep pace with inflation in 2024, average hourly earnings have grown by more than 32% since 2020, outpacing the national rate of inflation of 22.3% over that five-year period.

Despite these strengths, the region faces several ongoing challenges:

• The population is aging, reducing the share of residents in the prime working-age category (25–54). From 2013 to 2023, this group shrank by 2.3% or 9,700 workers.

• The housing market remains tight, with a 5.5% vacancy rate limiting availability and affordability.

To explore the full 2024 Berks County State of the Economy Report, including detailed charts and additional insights, please download the full 2024 Berks County State of the Economy Report conducted by Lancaster EDC's Center for Regional Analysis: <https://greater-reading.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2024-Berks-County-State-of-the-Economy.pdf>.

Why the Data is Important

Having a clear understanding of economic conditions helps residents, businesses, community leaders and policymakers make informed decisions. The trends and data in this report offer a valuable window into the strengths and challenges shaping Berks County's economy.

By analyzing this information, stakeholders can plan for growth, address workforce needs, attract talent and guide strategic investments.

GRCA's Commitment

GRCA remains committed to providing access to reliable, timely economic information. We believe transparency and data sharing are essential to building a vibrant and resilient economy in Berks County. This report reflects our dedication to supporting business and community leaders through informed decision-making and long-term planning.

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Rothenberger Insurance Recognized for Rapid Growth at 2025 Business Excellence Awards

When steady growth turns into significant momentum, people notice. That's exactly what happened with Rothenberger Insurance Services, recently honored by the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance at the 2025 Business Excellence Awards for achieving impressive revenue growth over the past three fiscal years. It's a standout moment for a firm that's built its reputation not on flash, but on fundamentals: relationships, responsiveness, and real-world expertise in both personal and commercial insurance.

With offices in West Reading and Wyomissing, the strength of their team is central to their success. At the West Reading office, you'll find founder Ron Rothenberger alongside Sean Wyant and Heidi Peters—seasoned professionals who know this region, this economy, and how to protect what matters most. Their Wyomissing team—Brady West, Claudia Jeronimo, Gail Schrantz, Nate Kutz, and Iris Panjota—brings a deep bench of experience and insight to every policy, whether it's safeguarding a small business, covering a new driver, or guiding a client through claims.

If your business has outgrown one-size-fits-all coverage—or you're ready for a more proactive, personalized approach—Rothenberger Insurance is here to help you move forward with confidence. From liability and property to specialized coverage for your unique industry, they make sure your protection grows alongside your business. Visit risquote.com/commercial-insurance to explore what's possible—or connect directly with their team to start the conversation.

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Ready to Grow Smarter? See How Interlace Communications Helps Local Businesses Streamline with AI and Marketing That Works

Behind every website launch, social campaign, bulk email, print piece, or AI integration is a team who knows how to keep things achievable while being practical. Founder and President Alyse Mitten, who is now also General Practitioner AI Consultant, brings decades of know-how to the table, guiding companies through the maze of new tech and marketing choices. Supporting her are Victoria McCloskey, VP of Operations; Annie Crider, Website Director & AI Oversight Manager; and Erin McVaugh, Administrative Assistant—a tight-knit crew dedicated to giving every client the attention, clarity, and follow-through they deserve.

Interlace Communications recently earned 5th place in Category 2 of the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance's 2025 Business Excellence Awards—a recognition of the real, measurable growth they've helped local businesses achieve over the past three years. For more than 30 years, Interlace has stayed true to one mission: make marketing simple, clear, and results-focused, so business owners can spend more time doing what they do best—running their business.

Should you feel ready to trim the busy-work, boost your marketing, or explore what AI can really do for your day-to-day operations, Interlace Communications is ready to walk you through it—no jargon, no pressure, just smart steps that fit how real people work. Whether you need a single ad, a fresh website, or help automating repetitive tasks, you'll have a local team right beside you to make it happen—so your business can stay ahead, without feeling left behind.

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FOCUS ON BERKS COUNTY BUSINESSES

PA INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT – Opening new location this summer!



This Summer PA Industrial Equipment Inc. will be moving from their rented Leola facility and opening a permanent Lancaster County location at 280 Earland Drive in New Holland, Pa. We are excited to make this move and to be able to assist our Lancaster County customers for years to come. Forklift service, rentals and sales are available at this location as well as our headquarters in Boyertown, Pa.

PA Industrial Equipment stocks a full inventory of new and used forklifts. The forklifts at PA Industrial Equipment range from 3,000 lb. capacity to 20,000 lb. capacity and are available with LP, gas, diesel and electric motors. One of PA Industrial Equipment's experienced salesmen can assist you in determining the correct equipment for your application. Many new Clark and Komatsu forklifts are available now for quick delivery. We also stock scissor lifts, pallet jacks, floor scrubbers, industrial batteries and chargers.

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The new PA Industrial Equipment location at 280 Earland Drive in New Holland, Pa

provided throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania. One of PA Industrial Equipment's factory trained technicians can be dispatched to your location quickly and efficiently. PA Industrial Equipment's well-stocked service vans allow technicians to complete many repairs on site at your location, often in one trip saving you time and money. More extensive repairs can be completed in one of our clean, well-equipped shops and rental forklifts can be provided for

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Bell Media Group

Since 2019, Bell Media Group has been redefining what it means to create meaningful connections between businesses and their audiences. Founded on the principle that “real resonates,” this Berks County-based marketing agency has built its reputation by developing people-focused campaigns that cut through the noise of today’s saturated digital landscape.

What started as a passion project by husband-and-wife team Zachary Bell and Kyra Denlinger, who bootstrapped their vision while juggling demanding 9-5 careers, has evolved into a full-service marketing firm that serves clients across diverse industries. Their entrepreneurial journey began with late nights and early mornings, building client relationships and crafting campaigns around their full-time commitments — fueled by copious amounts of coffee, sustained by shared learning experiences, and occasionally punctuated by a few tears along the way!

At the heart of Bell Media Group’s philosophy lies a commitment to storytelling and strategic partnership. “We do our best work when we ‘eat at the table together,’” explains Co-founder Zachary Bell, emphasizing their collaborative approach to client relationships. Bell Media Group’s goal isn’t delivering transactional marketing services from arm’s length — it’s about becoming an extension of each client’s team, understanding their challenges, goals, and unique market position.

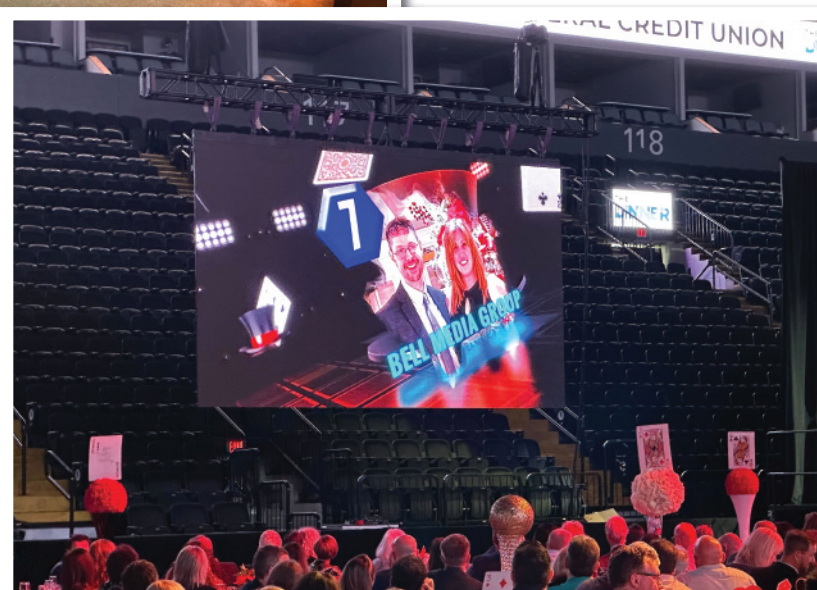
What truly sets Bell Media Group apart in the competitive marketing landscape is their deep-rooted belief that storytelling is the key to unlocking successful marketing. This philosophy stems from understanding that in an era of information overload, consumers don’t just buy products — they invest in brands that align with their values and aspirations. By leveraging innovative marketing technology platforms and data analytics, they transform concepts and information into dynamic, multi-touchpoint digital experiences that surprise and delight audiences.

The agency’s client roster reflects their versatility and effectiveness, spanning industries from retail and hospitality to professional services and technology.

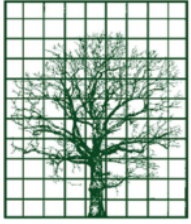
What unites these diverse partnerships is Bell Media Group’s ability to distill complex business objectives into clear, compelling strategies that drive measurable results. Their track record of helping clients achieve significant improvements in engagement rates, conversions, dwell time, and overall marketing ROI has established them as a trusted partner for businesses serious about long-term growth.



For additional information, please call 610.207.7604 or email zach@bellmediagr.com, and visit www.bellmediagr.com.



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