

FOCUS ON POTTSTOWN REVITALIZATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION IN POTTSTOWN

After decades of fits and starts, divisive squabbling amongst factions, entrenched pessimism, and well-meaning organizations spinning their wheels attempting to go it alone, a well-organized and determined group of organizations and individuals came together a little over ten years ago with a unified vision and purpose to revitalize the Borough of Pottstown. Those organizations included Pottstown Area Industrial Development Corp, (now rebranded as Pottstown Area Economic Development Corp. or PAED, Inc.), the Borough of Pottstown; the Pottstown School District, Montgomery County Community College West Campus, Pottstown Memorial Medical Center; The Hill School; and Montgomery County's economic development office, among others. As a result of those efforts, investor interest in Pottstown surged and long-vacant buildings began housing new restaurants, retail establishments and other small businesses. In this issue we feature a few of the businesses contributing to Pottstown's growth, and our upcoming June issue will feature an update from PAED, Inc.'s Executive Director Peggy Lee Clark on the current state of revitalization in the borough.

O'Donnell Weiss & Mattei, P.C.

The pending commercial development and investment in Pottstown is exciting and O'Donnell Weiss & Mattei, P.C. is proud to be a part of that growth and revitalization.

Our OWM business lawyers work with small family businesses, large corporations, partnerships, joint ventures, sole proprietorships, limited liability companies and non-profit organizations. Clients can look to OWM for help navigating today's extremely demanding business environment, guiding them through business formation, drafting and negotiation of contracts and agreements, succession planning, etc. Consider OWM as part of your "business team" here to help you achieve your goals.

Reaching a successful outcome in any legal matter begins with OWM's commitment to open communication and a knowledge-based, team approach. In addition to our Business Group, we have four (4) other practice teams



equipped to guide clients through their legal process –

- Real Estate/Title Insurance/Land Use,
- Elder Law/Special Needs Planning /Estate Planning/Estate Administration,
- Family Law/Divorce/Custody,
- Criminal/DUI/Accidents/Civil Litigation.


Keeping up-to-date with the latest technology, while still maintaining personal relationships and providing individualized service, is part of what makes OWM unique. We are committed to making the experience of seeking legal help as comfortable as possible.

As active members of the TriCounty

Area Chamber of Commerce, volunteers on many local Boards, and a sponsor of a multitude of community activities, OWM lawyers are committed to the communities in which we live and work.

Our fully staffed offices at 41 E. High Street in Pottstown, and 347 Bridge Street in Phoenixville, are open Monday through Friday for appointments. Since we are also a Title Agency, we hold commercial and residential real estate settlements in both offices as well.


Please visit our website www.owmlaw.com for additional information or call 610.323.2800 or 610.917.9347 and let our staff connect you with an attorney who can assist you.



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*The OWM Law Business, Banking & Real Estate Team:
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OWM Business Lawyers handle all phases of Business including Start-up or Purchase, Contract Negotiations, Financing, Employment Issues, Succession Planning & Dissolution. OWM Real Estate Attorneys handle Commercial Development, Residential Transactions, Tax Assessment Appeals, Title Insurance, Municipal, Zoning & Land Use. Whatever your legal needs are, OWM is ready to be part of your team!

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Vlahos Dunn Insurance and Iron Gate Biergarten — Invested in Pottstown

By James Vlahos

In 2007 after having a great year in our insurance business, my partner (Tom Dunn) and I decided to look into making another investment in Pottstown. Our insurance agency Vlahos Dunn Insurance has been a staple in the community for more than twenty years, living and breathing the changes that the Pottstown community has experienced over the past two plus decades. As our agency was growing nicely, we found a nice open lot right in the middle of town for sale with an approved plan for a building with commercial space on the first floor and condos on the upper two floors. We purchased the property and started to put our plan together to move forward — Then the Great Recession came in like a lion and put a halt to those plans!

A couple of other opportunities came under consideration over the next several years until a friend of ours



Vlahos Dunn Insurance Headquarters at 1954 E. High Street, Pottstown.

suggested that the lot at 230 E. High Street would make a perfect Beer Garden. We did our research and again formed a partnership, went to the Borough for approval and permitting and built our beautiful beer garden that is now open for all to enjoy. The name “Iron Gate Biergarten” is derived from the strong history of the iron business which built our town. The Iron Gate Biergarten is more than a bar. It’s a place to sit for a spell with old friends and meet new friends while trying Pennsylvania crafted spirits, beers, and




Iron Gate Biergarten located at 230 E. High Street, Pottstown.

ciders while enjoying a piece of history. We will continue to find ways to improve and expand our beer garden in the future. The mission of Iron Gate Biergarten is “Honoring Those Who Served” and for the past 13 years our insurance agency has been raising money for our veterans in the area with a popular annual Vlahos Dunn Insurance Veterans Golf Outing. This year’s outing will be held on September 20.

Go to our Instagram page and follow us and visit www.irongatebiergarten.com or call 610.203.4579. Thinking of a place for your event, bridal shower, birthday, or just the right place to gather with friends? Come join us as we grow together, and don’t forget to bring your furry friends! For additional information, please contact Jim Vlahos or Nicholas Vlahos at 610.326.1010; email: jvlahos@vlahosdunn.com; nvlahos@vlahosdunninsurance.com.





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Hobart's Run is Open for Your Business

Hobart's Run, a neighborhood improvement initiative and 501(c)3 created with support of The Hill School, now offers a Business Incentive Grant!

Qualified new businesses must open in the 500 to 900 blocks of East High Street. Our BIG of up to \$1,500 will help entrepreneurs with their first month's mortgage payment or rent. More information can be found at: hobartsrunpottstown.org/business.

To learn more about Hobart's Run and how we welcome local business development, please email **Twila Fisher**, Executive Director, at twila@hobartsrunpottstown.org, or call

610-780-6324

hobartsrunpottstown.com
Facebook.com/HobartsRun Instagram.com/HobartsRun



Espresso Yourself Book Café Opens in Hobart's Run



A ribbon-cutting ceremony hosted by the TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce at Espresso Yourself Book Café, 249 E. High St., took place on Tuesday, April 18. Guests were invited to stop by and help The Hill's entrepreneurship class students celebrate the opening of this experiential venture led by their teacher, Twila Fisher, executive director of Hobart's Run.

While the coffee shop will not be staffed entirely by the students, it was their collective vision and classwork that led to this venture, from choosing the name to envisioning a "zero waste" coffee shop featuring used books for browsing and borrowing, the sale of bulk products from shampoo to seeds, a variety of light foods, and shared community spaces.

Funding for this project came from multiple streams, most notably a gift from an alumnus who co-founded the Entrepreneurship class with Fisher in 2019 and continues to serve as a mentor to the students.

Espresso Yourself is now open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Shared Space, Shared Community Building Opportunities

Hoda Ehsan, Ph.D., chair of the Engineering Department at The Hill School; David Charles, executive director of the STRIVE Initiative; and Denise Williams, founder of Be ReZilient: Healing Through the Arts were among those present for the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Dr. Ehsan is working with Hobart's Run to establish a makerspace that will facilitate creative and potentially income-producing ventures for Pottstown residents by providing training on equipment such as a Cricut machine, 3D printer, Mug Press Machine, and CNC machine.

She explained that the Cricut and other available equipment will allow participants — especially young parents — to create customized t-shirts, mugs, and tote bags they then can sell. To make this training more accessible to parents, she also plans to provide STEM-based educational programming for kids ages 4-10 during the makerspace workshops. The first makerspace event was held Saturday, April 15 from 2-4 p.m.

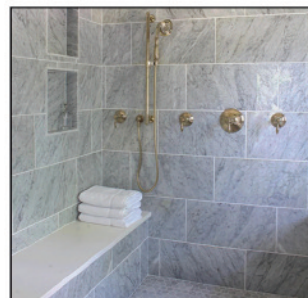
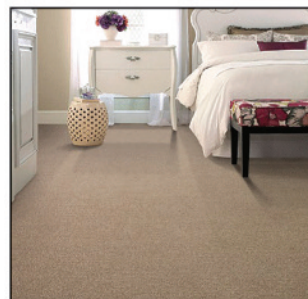
Both STRIVE and Be ReZilient organizations are local 501(c)3s that will maintain offices in the 249 E. High St. space. STRIVE provides mentorship for Pottstown youths, while Be ReZilient offers life coaching "infused with art and aromatherapy... to help manage behaviors, process feelings, reduce stress and anxiety, and increase self-esteem."

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"Owner-operated payroll services from a local partner you can trust." That's been the mission of Express Data Systems for the past four decades. While payroll processing remains the Pottstown company's guiding star, it continuously offers additional services to improve its customers' businesses.



a rigorous review process," adds Scotese, whose father, Jay Berman started Express Data in 1987. "Most of the services Express offers are the result of leveraging new technology to offer improved solutions to workplace challenges.

Recently, Express Data partnered with a comprehensive Human Resources support solution — HR Complete, available exclusively through Express Data Systems in the *Route 422 Business Advisor* readership area, includes an outsourced, on-demand human resources professional delivering support for:

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"A lot of smaller companies would like to utilize money and time-saving features to improve operations," says Jennifer Scotese, Express Data Systems' President and CEO. "But they don't have the resources to vet the best of the best or to assume the onboarding and continuing costs."

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"In this economic climate, businesses need to use every advantage they can," adds Scotese. "Owners have more important things to do than manage payroll and navigate the human resources universe, which can be very complex."

HR Complete is a streamlined answer to any human resources challenge any business — of any size — can leverage as a competitive advantage for attracting and retaining employees and more. For more information on HR Complete or to get started with improved human resource services in your organization, call Express Data at 610.495.7166 to learn how easy it is to get started or visit www.expressdata-sys.com.

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