



The Derrick. and The News-Herald • 2026

# BUSINESS

## Review & Forecast

Friday, Feb. 13, 2026

### Section H — Clarion County



The completion of renovations to the Clarion County Courthouse, seen during a break from January's snow and rain, has become the county's priority in 2026. See the story on Page H2.

By Jamie Hunt

### Section

# H

Section H of the Business Review and Forecast provides insight on the various businesses and organizations that power the Clarion County economy.

Among the featured stories is one about Clarion County government, which continues to make completion of the courthouse renovation its priority.

There's also the combined efforts of the county and Six Senses RiverStone Estate in Foxburg to have the airport and the resort working in conjunction to help boost tourism in the area.

The section offers a look at work being done by the Clarion County Economic Development Corp., which works with existing and prospective businesses to create and keep family-sustaining jobs in the county.

There also is an overview of the issues and topics that Clarion Borough faced in 2025 and what the borough plans to address in 2026.

This section also contains several articles that were provided by Clarion-area businesses.



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# The ruling is the courthouse

## Clarion County’s ‘priority’ in 2026 is completion of the renovation

**BY RANDY BARTLEY**  
Staff writer

The completion of the renovation project at the Clarion County Courthouse is the top priority for the county in 2026.

“That project is our priority,” Clarion County Commissioner Wayne Brosius said during one of the county commissioners’ public meetings in late 2025. He declined to give a specific date for completion of the work, but it is hoped it will be finished in spring.

Commissioner Ted Tharan estimated the total cost of the project is between \$5 million and \$6 million, but the final cost will not be known until all of the bills are paid.

In November 2023, the commonwealth’s Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program notified the county that it had received a \$900,000 grant for the rehabilitation of the courthouse.

The county also received a \$1.8 million federal U.S. Department of Agriculture appropriation arranged by U.S. Sen. John Fetterman. The \$1.8 million appropriation will be used to install four restrooms, accessible parking and sewer lines, as well as re-wiring the entire building.

There is a 25% county grant. Brosius said the match for that grant was included in the 2025 county budget. The county also took out a \$2.89 million line of credit to complete the project.

According to the grant application, the courthouse work entailed demolition, framing, plumbing, HVAC and electrical upgrades. In addition, a fresh-air intake was installed to allow for increased airflow throughout the ground level.

The unexpected discovery of asbestos in July 2024 caused a minor setback. The material was found in the basement floor tile, and it had to be removed. All of the plaster ceilings were also removed. The county’s maintenance crew worked on the demolition.

The work on the basement walls exposed the original brickwork and railroad rails.

The rails date to the 1800s. The distinctive tile on the basement walls will remain, as it’s of historic value.

The project received an additional setback when Deets Mechanical Group LLC, the successor to original contractor Deets Mechanical Inc., declared bankruptcy. Phil Deets, the former owner of Deets Mechanical Inc., was later hired by the county as a part-time employee to oversee completion of the work.

In October, Brosius said framing work was continuing on the third floor to accommodate new restrooms. He said electrical work continues on the second and third floors.

Most of the county offices were moved from the courthouse to the Clarion County Complex in Shippenville in April 2024. The Court of Common Pleas, and the offices of the sheriff, prothonotary, assessor, planning and tax claim were relocated by county employees.

Tharan said when personnel are returned to the courthouse, the large meeting room, currently being used by the Court of Common Pleas, will be available for other purposes. Other county offices currently renting space in private buildings will be moved into the county-owned building.

Brosius said recently there are no definite plans for the complex after the renovation is completed.

### Crawford Area Transportation Authority

Clarion County would like to expand its relationship with the Crawford Area Transportation Authority in 2026. CATA provides services in Crawford, Venango and Clarion counties.

“We want to do more with them,” Commissioner Braxton White said. “We might join that authority and make it a three-county authority.”

White said joining CATA would “streamline” some things. “Right now, a van in Venango County cannot make a pickup in Clarion County. If we are together,



By Jamie Hunt

**Fencing surrounding the Clarion County Courthouse in early January is an indication there is still work to do in regard to the building’s ongoing renovation. The county’s hope is for the project to be finished in spring.**

we can provide better service.”

Brosius said there is the possibility of a new building near the complex, which is located in Shippenville.

Clarion County joined CATA in 2023. In July, the commissioners learned the county’s shared-ride services increased by 3% from the previous year. In addition, 159 new riders signed up, bringing total ridership to 43,738. That is an increase from the previous year.

CATA is currently the provider for shared-ride services in the county along with being program administrator and operator for the medical assistance transportation program.

CATA introduced an IVR system to provide phone calls to remind riders the night before and prior to the arrival of their shared ride. The system helps reduce trip cancellations and “no-shows.”

CATA secured capital

funding to install new radio communication technology on all of the Clarion paratransit vehicles; thus improving communications and reducing driver distraction.

CATA’s fleet of county-owned buses is stored at 338 Amsler Ave. in Shippenville.

### Clarion County Park

There also might be changes at Clarion County Park. A pet park is a possibility. Brosius said the project is in a very preliminary stage at this time.

In June, Tom Switzer, pastor at Grace Community Church in Curlsville, proposed adding a disc golf course at the park, which can be either nine or 18 holes. The course can utilize unused spaces or wooded areas. The course he proposed generally follows the perimeter of the park.

The only equipment needed are the discs and a “basket” in

place of a hole. The metal baskets are mounted on a 5-foot metal pole. Attached chains capture the disc and deposit it into a metal tray.

There are courses at Pine Crest Country Club near Brookville and at Hasson Park in Oil City.

Estimated cost for the baskets and other work is about \$18,000. There would be no cost to the county.

There have been other additions to the park.

In June 2024, a new playground was added. The project included the replacement of a lot and of outdated playground equipment, and the addition of the shade pavilion, fencing, access that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and a soft rubber surface.

Funding was secured from a state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources grant, local fundraising events, mental health and

disability money, the county’s Marcellus Shale Legacy Fund and funds from the county’s general fund.

### Infrastructure

The county has received a grant of \$300,000 from the Commonwealth Financing Authority for the Mill Creek bridge renovation project.

The bridge between Clarion and Millcreek townships carries Millcreek Road. The total cost of the project is an estimated \$505,000. The county has to contribute \$205,000 toward the project. According to Brosius, an engineering company is working on the project.

“We want to keep things running in 2026,” he said.

**RANDY BARTLEY** reporter for The Derrick and The News-Herald, can be reached at 814-715-3093 or at randybartley.thederrick@gmail.com.

# Clarion Borough awaits effect of countywide reassessment

**BY RANDY BARTLEY**  
Staff writer

Like other Clarion County municipalities, Clarion Borough is struggling to gauge the impact of the recently instituted countywide reassessment.

“We really don’t know where we stand at this point,” Clarion Borough Treasurer and Projects Manager Todd Colosimo said. “It’s a mixed bag. It doesn’t appear that it will be a disaster.

“As I understand it, we could have raised our taxes by 10% but we did not do that. We are revenue neutral through this year.”

Clarion County contracted with Vision Government Solutions to provide a countywide reassessment that was completed in 2025. The last countywide reassessment was in 1975.

The new tax rates will be implemented for the 2026 tax year. The new assessment is preliminary and is based on 100% of the expected fair market value of a property as of Jan. 1, 2025.

In response to the reassessment in December, Clarion Borough Council passed a resolution to adjust the tax millage rate for 2026 to 3.82646, after the countywide reassessment. The rate is intended to generate the same revenue as last year.

The real estate tax is the largest revenue source for the borough, but only 25% of the borough is taxable. The balance consists of nontaxable properties belonging to the county, school district or PennWest Clarion University.

The borough lost a source of income after the 2020 census

“We really don’t know where we stand at this point, it’s a mixed bag. It doesn’t appear that it will be a disaster. As I understand it, we could have raised our taxes by 10% but we did not do that. We are revenue neutral through this year.”

**Todd Colosimo**

Clarion Borough Treasurer and Projects Manager

and has not been eligible for entitled Community Development Block Grant funding since 2021.

CDBG funds are based on census results and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, university students were not permitted to be on campus and the borough could not include students in the census. Without those students, the borough fell below the required population level.

“We missed the cutoff by 39 persons and that cost us about \$100,000 a year,” Colosimo said. “That is about half a million over the past four years.”

The borough can compete with other municipalities for CDBG funds awarded to the county.

### Projects

Colosimo said the borough last year finished building a pavilion at Paul A. Weaver Park that had been a “long time coming.” The borough received \$40,730 in CDBG funds toward the project.

“We just maintained things last year. We did some paving projects. There weren’t any big projects,” he said.

There is, however, one big project scheduled for 2026.

“We are going to try to put a new roof on the new section of the fire department building,” Colosimo said. “The 30-year-old, three-bay truck garage has a flat rubber roof. It is getting near the end of its service life.” The bid will be let soon and no firm cost for the replacement project was available at press time.

The borough received financial support from neighboring municipalities and the fire department. “It is all local money right now,” he said.

### New zoning officer

Joe Wolf, a Knox native, is Clarion Borough’s new zoning

officer. A U.S. Air Force veteran, he started with the borough in February.

### Police

The Clarion Borough Police Department will be getting a new vehicle and is looking to update its computer system. The department has six officers, a detective and the police chief.

### Building permits

Wolf said the borough received 67 requests for building permits in 2025. “The majority was for improvements to private homes.”

### Streets

Colosimo said the borough tries to replace equipment as funds become available. “We use the plow trucks year-round. They get quite a workout. We will do our annual Liquid Fuels paving projects, but there are no big borough projects.”

Liquid Fuels are taxes assessed on every gallon of gasoline used in the state. The amount returned to the municipality is pro-rated, based on usage.

He said the Pennsylvania American Route 322 water and sewer line replacement project will be the biggest project in the borough. The work is scheduled to begin in the spring and continue until midsummer.

He said the project will begin at the PennWest Clarion football field and continue eastward to the Clarion County Courthouse. Part of the project will be to eliminate old lead water lines.

“We are looking forward to a great 2026,” Colosimo said.

**RANDY BARTLEY** reporter for The Derrick and The News-Herald, can be reached at 814-715-3093 or at randybartley.thederrick@gmail.com.



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# ‘It all starts with the airport’

## Clarion County realizes RiverStone Estate’s success will depend on it

BY RANDY BARTLEY  
Staff writer

The future of the Clarion County Airport is linked to the development of the RiverStone Estate near Foxburg.

“From my standpoint, the airport is one of the most critical pieces of infrastructure we have,” said Clarion County Commissioner Braxton White, the commissioners’ representative to the Clarion County Airport Authority. “It needs to work. The development of the RiverStone project has brought all of this to the forefront.”

White said some people who will lodge at RiverStone would be flying in on private jets. “We have to be sure our airport is able to accommodate those aircraft. We had a discussion with Delta Development and a lot of our focus will be on grants focused on the airport.”

Delta Development is a Harrisburg-based firm engaged by the county to seek grant opportunities for various projects in the county.

To make the airport capable of supporting private jets, several alterations will need to be made.

“We will have to determine if we need to extend the runway, add fuel tanks, add more hangars and address the sewage situation,” White said.

The hangars, he explained, are near capacity and that is a concern. “There is a lot of work that needs to be done, long term,” he said. There are currently 24 hangars at the airport.

Some changes have to be made immediately.

“Right now, the fuel pump at the airport is on its last legs,” White said. “The Airport Authority has been building up a fund and the county has contributed toward it.” The airport, he explained, earns income from fuel sold to aircraft owners.

“RiverStone is a project the community has embraced overall,” White said. “It is no coincidence that the Governor’s Cup Golf Tournament was held in Foxburg. I know Gov. Shapiro’s administration believes in this project.

“It all starts with the airport. When you look at what RiverStone is going to do to this community economically, we have to step up and make it happen.”

White said a meeting with all of the stakeholders will be scheduled in the near future, and “it’s not just about RiverStone. We have other people who use the airport regularly. STAT MedEvac is there and Roto Power.”

In September 2024, Six Senses, an international developer, announced plans for the development of the 13,000-square-foot stone mansion. According to its website, it will serve as a centerpiece for the property, alongside a Victorian carriage house designed by Philadelphia architect Frank Furness.

Clarion County Commissioner Wayne Brosius said Six Senses had estimated the creation of 240 good-paying permanent jobs and hundreds more construction jobs.

According to a Six Senses news release, “The resort’s 77 new guest rooms will be woven into the contours of the 1,200-acre estate, with over 50 miles of trails and seven miles of riverfront, threading together a rich heritage with a visionary master plan. Forty branded residences will provide the lifestyle of a private country home with the benefits of a world-class service team and year-round adventures.”

The website said the “guestrooms and cottages blend an off-grid vibe with all the luxurious amenities and the branded residences will echo similar warm, uncluttered, and sustainable living.”

The 16,000-square-foot Six Senses Spa will adopt a “high-tech, high-touch approach to wellness.”

The spa will be situated within the restored stone walls of the Fox Family’s English Garden. Facilities for indoor and outdoor classes, including meditation, stretching, yoga and Pilates will be available. The 4,500-square-foot fitness center will be equipped with a 25-meter active pool.

Onsite farm-to-table dining



Photos by Jamie Hunt

**RiverStone Estate is seen on the left, overlooking the Allegheny River. Officials are banking on RiverStone Estate and the Clarion County Airport working in conjunction to play a large role in the area’s future economy.**

will include a specialty restaurant, a central courtyard with smaller tasting bars and the Orchard Alley pop-up experience. A feature will be maple syrup produced onsite from the property’s 5,000-plus maple trees.

The equestrian center will house a 22,000-square-foot indoor riding arena, 36 stalls with heated floors and quiet corners for equine therapy programs. Residential owners will be able to board their horses year-round.

The estate will be home to a variety of cows, sheep, goats, donkeys and a chicken chalet, producing fresh eggs daily.

According to its website, “Six Senses was founded in 1995 with a mission to promote responsible practices in top-tier hospitality.” Six Senses RiverStone is expected to open in 2028.

The airport will host the third annual Appalachian Mountain STOL (Short Take Off and Landing) event this summer.

“There is a lot of potential with that event,” White said.

**RANDY BARTLEY** reporter for The Derrick and The News-Herald, can be reached at 814-715-3093 or at randybartley.thederrick@gmail.com.



# CCEDC says 2025 success due to its partners

BY RANDY BARTLEY  
Staff writer

The Clarion County Economic Development Corporation made progress in several areas in 2025.

At the CCEDC’s annual luncheon this past fall, Executive Director Jarred Heuer said the nonprofit’s success is due to its partners. “There is no rope that CCEDC pulls alone. That is the common theme that carries through every success we have had. Our progress is the result of planning with our partners, the county commissioners, Delta Development.

Heuer recapped several projects coming from the Department of Community and Economic Development’s Neighborhood Assistance Program. Awards included \$120,000 for the Knox Child-care Initiative, \$225,120 for the Wolf’s Corners Fair Association and \$715,000 for Second Avenue Park (now “Freedoms Flame Park”).

Heuer said the regional Main Street program continues to operate. He said there are visioning workshops in each of those five communities. “We brought people together to see their vision for their downtown.”

He said the CCEDC also would be hiring a community development manager.

The need in the region for dentistry was filled through the McElhattan Foundation, which helped in the renovation and reopening of an existing dental office in Knox, according to Heuer.

The Clarion River Access plan is already underway to make the Clarion River more accessible, Heuer said, and

there are plans to improve access on 12 sections of the river, from Cooksburg to the Piney Dam.

The Clarion “Alley Cats” were presented with the Good Neighbor Award at the luncheon. The award recognizes individuals who “take responsibility for their community because they believe in taking care of the place they call home.”

It is a completely volunteer organization that is focused on beautifying Main Street Clarion using floral plantings. It raised nearly \$30,000 to invest in new planters and expand its beautification footprint.

### Tourism

The county’s tourism initiative — “Discover Clarion County” — is gaining traction.

“We have grown significantly over the past year,” CCEDC Tourism Director Hind Karns said at the fall luncheon. “We were able to do so much in one year. I am really excited to see what we can do in the future.”

She said prior to the CCEDC taking over the tourism program, the county was represented by a “generic” multicounty agency. “Now, the only mission of our team is Clarion County.”

She said when the CCEDC took over there were no assets at all, no photos, no social media, nothing. “Now, we have a river access plan, an outdoor push and new projects.”

The tourist promotion agency has been working on pumping up local events through both physical and online marketing. Physical marketing includes billboards at

“A lot of people visit, fall in love with the area, and decide to invest in it. Many of our lodging owners and business owners started as visitors who decided to make Clarion home.”

several locations in Pittsburgh high-traffic areas and table activations.

As the official tourism promotion agency for the county, CCEDC also focuses on tourism as a driver of economic growth. The Discover Clarion County initiative highlights local attractions, including outdoor recreation, historic sites and small businesses to draw visitors who contribute to the local economy.

“We want to market Clarion County not just to tourists, but also to entrepreneurs,” Karns said. “A lot of people visit, fall in love with the area, and decide to invest in it. Many of our lodging owners and business owners started as visitors who decided to make Clarion home.”

Karns said funding is vital to promoting tourism, and that Clarion County had a lower hotel tax rate, which is assessed on each room rented by hotels and other

lodging facilities. The county had assessed a 2% surcharge but raised that to 5%.

“Our main goal was to create a unique brand. We are en route to achieve that,” Karns said. “As a small organization, we cannot afford to spend too much money. Our budget is lean. Our team is small but mighty.

“We have to be high impact, strategic and very effective in what we do. We want to project, improve and develop. We also want to protect our outdoor resources.”

### Broadband

Steps are being taken to bridge Pennsylvania’s “digital desert” — the northwestern section of the state.

Tom McKinley, chief executive officer of CoreConnect, said improving the “digital backbone of the region is essential. He said without broadband, rural communities face

**Hind Karns**  
CCEDC Tourism Director

a devastating cycle: declining property values, health care deserts, educational disadvantage and an exodus of young professionals.

He said with high-speed connectivity, everything changes. Connected homes rise about 7% in value, telehealth reduces travel by 85%, remote workers relocate, tax base strengthens and students compete on skills, not connectivity.

Over \$90 million in federal funding has been allocated to expand broadband access in 10 Pennsylvania counties, including Erie, Warren and Crawford.

The funding, managed by the Pennsylvania Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, is part of the CoreConnect project, which aims to create an open-access fiber network. This initiative is expected to connect over 10,000 locations to high-speed internet, addressing a critical need highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

McKinley said BEAD is a once-in-a-generation chance. “Our secured \$90.7 million requires matching capital. Missing this window risks permanent digital exclusion.” The total project cost is \$290 million. Bonds will cover all but \$30 million.

The project is immense. The plan is to install 2,600 miles of fiber-optic cable across 10 counties. Fiber-optic cable is faster but also has a longer lifespan. McKinley said the service would run to homes, schools and businesses.

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# Kendzior Orthodontics marks 50 years of smiles in Clarion County



**SUBMITTED ARTICLE**

Kendzior Orthodontics celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2025, marking half a century of orthodontic care and dedication to the community.

The practice was founded in 1975 by Dr. Gerard Kendzior, who earned his dental degree from West Virginia University and his orthodontic certification from the University of North Carolina. He opened his original office at 1261 Elk Street in Franklin, later expanding to a second location at 15 South 2nd Avenue in Clarion. In 1986, the Franklin office was relocated to 2119 Allegheny Boulevard in Reno, which remains the primary location today.

In 2001, his son, Dr. Bradley Kendzior, joined the practice after earning both his DDS in dentistry and MS in Orthodontics from West Virginia University. Working together with his son was one of Gerard Kendzior’s greatest joys before his retirement in 2003.

Gerard Kendzior passed away in 2020, leaving behind a lasting legacy of orthodontic care and community support.

In addition to the Kendzior family’s leadership, the practice’s staff has been essential to its success over the decades.

Many team members have served 10, 20, and even 30-plus years, and Brad Kendzior credits them with not only knowledgeable and excellent patient care, but providing a fun, happy environment for both patients and employees.

As Brad Kendzior celebrates five decades of service, during which Kendzior Orthodontics has blended its history with new orthodontic advancements and modern technologies, he is honored to have continued the legacy his father created and have his name synonymous with beautiful smiles.

“It is very fulfilling to provide a service that enhances the lives of people in such a profound way,” he said. “Seeing the generations of smiles we’ve helped create is incredibly rewarding.”



Contributed photo

Owner Bud Wilshire, right, stands with 20-year employee Steve Fabry on the showroom floor.

# The Carpet Barn marks 55 years with showroom updates

**SUBMITTED ARTICLE**

The Carpet Barn is celebrating its 55th year of service to Clarion County and the surrounding region.

Founded in 1971 by brothers-in-law Tom Shreffler and Jim Wilshire, the business has remained true to its original objective: “Excellent Service at Affordable Prices.” Today, owner Bud Wilshire and 20-year employee Stephen Fabry continue that tradition, greeting customers personally at the door.

To mark the 55-year milestone, the store is unveiling an interior facelift, including a new color scheme and updated showroom flooring.

“Service is as important as price,” Bud Wilshire said. “You want someone who offers great service and is going to stand behind what they sell. My advice would be to find a local dealer.”

The store offers thousands of styles, colors and textures, including carpet, luxury vinyl, hardwood and sheet vinyl. Services include free estimates, consultations and expert installation. The company prides itself on its “Red Carpet Treatment,” assuring customers that whatever needs to be done to complete the installation will be handled — including a final vacuuming.

The Carpet Barn typically serves customers within a 30-mile radius, including Marienville, Brookville, East Brady and Seneca, though staff will travel farther if necessary.

Reflecting on the anniversary, Wilshire thanked the many customers who have made the business a success over the decades.

The store is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 814-226-7332 or visit [clarioncarpetbarn.com](http://clarioncarpetbarn.com).

# Solar initiative could place the spotlight on Clarion County

**BY RANDY BARTLEY**  
Staff writer

Clarion County could be a brighter place in 2026 if additional solar farms are built in the county.

“Toward the end of the year we had a lot of requests for information regarding solar projects,” Clarion County Planner Kristi Amato said. “The Lake Lucy solar project should be operational soon.”

The 178-acre, 20-megawatt solar farm in Washington Township is being developed by Cypress Creek Renewables, of North Carolina and California.

Cypress also is developing solar farms in Cherry Tree Township, Venango County, and also in Erie and the Poconos.

Power generated at the solar farm in Washington Township will be used as needed locally in a multicounty area. The solar panels used there will be two-sided to help with maximum generation. That project property lies between Callensburg and Sligo.

“We had approved another project in 2022, but nothing has happened there; their five-year permit will expire in 2027,” Amato said.

There also are smaller solar fields being developed.

“We permitted a small one down at CavCo (formerly Commodore Homes) over their parking lot. It generates some energy for them,” Amato said. “The employees park their cars under it, which keeps their cars warm during

the winter. I thought that was a clever idea.”

There might be a few roadblocks before the solar farms can be developed.

“We have been told that before the solar farms can go online, the local electric companies have to make some improvements to the power grid,” Amato said.

There is almost a constant stream of requests for information regarding solar opportunities in the county.

“Sometimes, developers will call in with questions and they won’t even tell us what or where they are looking to put a project,” Amato said. “They will ask about regulations, zoning, building permits and those sort of things.”

The county did adopt a

provision in the land-use ordinance that requires a bond for the removal of solar equipment at the end of the project’s life.

The Clarion County ordinance includes setbacks from the adjacent property owner, height restriction and decommissioning rules. When the site is decommissioned, the owner or developer has 12 months to dismantle and remove all solar-related equipment.

“Pennsylvania is not particularly sunny, but I believe the technology has advanced to the point that they can make solar farms work here,” Amato said. “Pennsylvania does have a good electrical grid and I think that is part of the charm of solar projects.”

**RiverStone Estate**

According to Amato, the Planning Department has not received any plans from the RiverStone Estate project.

“In reading RiverStone’s announcement, I would imagine, based on the article released by the developer, that they would need water and sewer infrastructure development,” she said.

“I believe Foxburg is getting some help for their water treatment plant and that should help that development,” Amato said. “There is a lot of backend work that has to be done before they will be ready to go.”

**Infrastructure projects**

The Farmington Water and Sewer Authority, sold to

Pennsylvania American, and the Lake Lucy solar project will tie into that.

“For that area it is a very big project,” Amato said. “They received a Community Development Discretionary Grant of \$1.8 million. That’s a pretty big project for them.”

“There are always conversations with developers and there are always surprises around the corner that we don’t even know about. I think we will have a busy 2026.”

**RANDY BARTLEY** reporter for The Derrick and The News-Herald, can be reached at 814-715-3093 or at [randybartley.thederrick@gmail.com](mailto:randybartley.thederrick@gmail.com).

# Route 66 Sporting Goods passes ownership to next generation

**SUBMITTED ARTICLE**

Route 66 Sporting Goods is marking its 22nd year in business with a transition in leadership. Lori Gadley, daughter of founders Lee and Linda Dechant, has officially taken ownership of the Shippenville store.

Located on Route 66, 1.5 miles north of U.S. Route 322, the business employs a knowledgeable staff including Mike Beveridge, Mindy

Maurer, Joe Winger, Pam Bauer, Wayne Gadley and Jason Knisley.

As they have since they first opened, Route 66 Sporting Goods continues to stock products that meet the needs of all hunters, fishermen, re-loaders, campers, archers and trappers.

To kick off the 2026 season, the store has stocked several new items, including limited-run custom engraved

Ruger rifles and revolvers, Bergara carbon fiber rifles and Marsupial Gear binocular harnesses. The clothing department has also expanded to include heated vests, socks and gloves, as well as apparel from Pnuma and Muddy.

Known as the largest retail trapping supplier in Western Pennsylvania, the store will continue to host fur buying events with Keith Winkler of Sterling Fur. Updates on these events are posted on the store’s Facebook page.

The archery department, run by Gadley and Beveridge, remains an authorized Mathews dealer. The shop also carries bows from Hoyt, Bowtech, Tenpoint, Excalibur and Bear, along with a full range of 3D targets and

range-finding sights.

The firearm selection includes major manufacturers such as Browning, Weatherby, Ruger, Christensen, Remington, Winchester and Smith & Wesson. The store also stocks black powder equipment, including flintlock rifles by Pedersoli.

The fishing department has also been significantly expanded, particularly for bass anglers. The shelves now feature baits from Gary Yamamoto, Z-Man, Strike King, Bass Assassin, Rapala and Fish Bio. Beyond bass gear, the store carries an extensive selection of equipment for fly fishing, fly tying and ice fishing.

Beyond hunting, the store maintains a dedicated section for home processing and

canning — a staple for local outdoorsmen. Inventory includes LEM grinders, Max-Vac sealers, Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry canners and processing kits from Con Yeager. New for 2026, the store is stocking Bearded Butcher seasonings and high-temp cheese for sausage making.

The camping section remains fully stocked with tents, flashlights, Coleman fuel and propane. A local favorite, the U.S.-made Palmer cast iron pie irons, are also available.

For footwear and apparel, the store carries clothing from Gamehide, Badlands, DSG and Rocky. The boot selection features brands such as LaCrosse, Rocky, DSG and Muck. Route 66 is also an authorized dealer for

Kenetrek Boots. For those venturing into rougher terrain, the store stocks snake boots and snake gaiters, as well as Badlands packs and accessories.

Store management emphasizes that they offer layaway and can special order items not currently in stock. They also sell hunting and fishing licenses, as well as season passes for Allegheny National Forest ATV trails.

The store will host its “Christmas in July” open house July 24-26 with store-wide sales.

Route 66 Sporting Goods is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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# Schirmer Computer Services expands into AI, security

**SUBMITTED ARTICLE**

Schirmer Computer Services is marking 39 years in business by expanding its service offerings to include artificial intelligence solutions and enhanced cybersecurity packages.

Already known for com-

puter repair, system upgrades and software installation, the business is now introducing AI consulting and local installation services. According to the company, these additions are designed to bolster security on personal computers while

remaining reasonably priced.

Some other new offerings for 2025 include setting up laptops and desktop computers with a focus on security, as well as the removal of pre-installed “bloatware.”

Looking ahead to 2026,

Schirmer Computer Services plans to broaden its educational initiatives regarding AI. Long-term plans include the rollout of complete security packages, full-service repair options and comprehensive network design.



SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Clarion Rehab Services (CRS) is expanding its clinical team and reaffirming its commitment to local care as it enters its 2026 fiscal year.

A privately owned business serving Clarion County for more than 40 years, CRS recently added three new staff members. Tony Saccerino joined the team as a physical therapist, bringing the clinic's total number of PTs to nine. The company also hired Chelsey Aukamp as a physical therapist assistant and Karissa Weaver as a rehab technician.

CRS operates three outpatient clinics: the office of Drs. Semeyn, Doverspike and Moore in New Bethlehem; the Clarion YMCA; and the old skating rink behind Walmart.

In addition to outpatient care, CRS provides in-hospital therapy at Independence Health System — Clarion Hospital. As the hospital system prepares to become part of the West Virginia University Health System in 2026, CRS leadership emphasizes that local care remains a priority.

"We are steadfast in our commitment to be here for our community," said Seth Babington, CRS owner.

The clinics continue to



treat a diverse range of conditions, including strokes, cancer, Parkinson's disease, brain injuries, pulmonary dysfunction and orthopedic trauma. Staff also provide care for sports, hand, neck and back injuries.

Beyond standard physical, occupational and speech services, the practice offers specialized care including pelvic floor therapy, lymphedema therapy, swallowing evaluations, cognitive therapy and pediatric care.



# SMI Homes caps year of growth

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Structural Modular Innovations (SMI Homes) is entering 2026 with a focus on momentum and partnership following a year of growth and product refinement.

The manufacturer, which holds a reputation spanning more than 30 years, serves dealers, builders and architects across Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, West Virginia and Vermont.

The company began 2025 with industry recognition, receiving the MHBA "Home of the Month" award in January for its "Pickett Fence" home. Built in Pittsburgh, the home was part of the America at Home Study, a project designed to redefine modern living spaces for the next generation of homeowners.

To meet evolving market demands for speed and affordability, SMI Homes recently introduced its Leading Edge Spec Series. The line features three new models — the Roseville, Waterville and Cedarville — designed to offer dealers strong curb appeal and smart features. The company also revamped its online "Builders Center" and digital décor booklets to streamline communication between dealers and customers.

Behind the scenes, SMI invested in leadership and personnel. Joel German joined the team as sales manager, bringing years of modular production experience to help refine sales efficiencies and shorten workflows.

The company also honored two long-tenured employees: Will Miller, recognized for 20 years of service, and Alan White, recognized for 30 years.

SMI Homes, located at 101 Southern Ave., continues to seek experienced workers to join its team. For more information on floor plans or employment opportunities, call 814-764-5555 or visit smihomes.com.



# Car Mate Trailers phases out open trailer production

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Car Mate Trailers, Inc. is shifting its manufacturing focus for 2026. After decades of including them among their lineup, the company announced it will phase out its open utility and open car trailer lines to dedicate full production capacity to its enclosed cargo trailers.

Established in 1982 and located at 32591 Route 66, the company continues to build American-made units for more than 60 dealers across the Northeastern United States and Eastern Canada. Current owners Fred Ochs and Michelle Ochs-Hughes thanked customers who purchased the open-style trailers over the decades, noting those units will continue to serve owners for years to come.

As part of the shift, Car Mate introduced several updates to its enclosed lines. A new 7.5-foot-wide cargo trailer — featuring extra height, a beavertail and a step-out awning door — is designed specifically for the growing side-by-side vehicle market. Additionally, the company updated its Contractor Tool Box Package to feature two factory-built, 48-by-48-inch swing-up awning doors with gas props.

The company employs more than 80 welders, painters and craftsmen. More than a quarter of the workforce has

been with the company for at least a decade, including senior employee Dave Aaron Jr., who marks 41 years of service.

The Car Mate team is also mourning the unexpected loss of Tim Beichner, who passed away in June after 37 years with the company. A talented cabinet craftsman and electrician, Tim held nearly 40 years of knowledge regarding specialty builds. Colleagues said Tim was a man of few words, but that his absence is immense in so many ways.

To keep pace with industry trends, Car Mate representatives will attend the National Association of Trailer Manufacturers (NATM) trade show in February 2026 and the National American Trailer Dealers Association (NATDA) show in September 2026.

The company noted that its customer base includes numerous repeat buyers, such as those in the landscaping, contracting/construction and recreational industries, as well as townships and municipalities.

Beyond manufacturing, the company operates the Car Mate Truck Garage on Route 66 in Lucinda. The garage offers state inspections and repairs for cars, trucks, RVs and buses. For garage services, call Rich at 814-226-4712.

For dealer locations, visit carmate-trailers.com or call 800-733-8856.

# FL Crooks & Co. marks 121 years, expands jewelry and tech focus

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

FL Crooks & Co. is preparing to enter its 121st year in business. Founded in 1905, the long-standing retailer plans to celebrate the milestone alongside the upcoming America250 festivities in 2026.

For the 2025 season, the store expanded its inventory across several departments. The menswear section continues to feature Tommy Bahama, while the sportswear lineup added Kawala to its roster of major brands, including Patagonia, The North Face, Kuhl and Kavu.

The tuxedo and wedding business also saw growth in volume. The store stocks sizes ranging from 34 to 62, with staff emphasizing that measuring and fitting is "an art and a science."

In the women's department,



popular lines include Joseph Ribkoff, French Dressing Jeans, Tribal, Charlie B and Mona B.

The shoe department has introduced new styles of NEXGrip boots. The Canadian brand features a patent-

ed retractable cleat system designed for navigating icy Pennsylvania winters. Other growing footwear lines include Johnston & Murphy, Blundstone, Salomon and Birkenstock.

The store also made a

significant investment in its jewelry department in 2025 with the addition of Brosway Italia. Several staff members traveled to the company's plant in Italy in September to study the line of necklaces, bracelets and earrings.

The store also added enewton, a jewelry line popular with younger customers, while maintaining its selection of Brighton, Pandora and Mariana.

Looking back, the business was a major sponsor of the 3rd Annual ALF Gala held at the Haskell House in September 2025. The event was directed by Susan Stehle Slike.

Looking ahead, the retailer plans to implement artificial intelligence into its daily operations to increase efficiency for both the physical store and its e-commerce division, flcrooks.com.

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# Lander’s General Store marks 130 years of service

*Second-floor antique section offers new selections for shoppers*

**SUBMITTED ARTICLE**

Lander’s General Store has served Lucinda and the surrounding communities since 1896. Now, as it celebrates 130 years in business, the genuine old country store is expanding.

The business recently renovated the second floor of its century-old building to launch “Lander’s Store Second Floor Antiques.” The new section features a rotating lineup of vendors selling antique, vintage and primitive finds.

Despite the expansion, Lander’s remains true to its roots as a general supplier. The store stocks hardware basics including nuts, bolts, plumbing and electrical supplies, as well as a full line of Valspar paint that can be tinted on-site. Staff also provide specialized services such as cutting steel, glass and plexi-glass to size, threading pipe and repairing window screens.

Lander’s maintains its “general store” format, with an inventory that goes beyond hardware. Shoppers can find camping gear, propane tank filling or exchange, seeds in bulk, and hard-to-find canning jars, as well as Amish jams, jellies, rockers and rugs.

The store has a little bit of everything, staying true to its long-standing motto: “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it.”

Owners Randy and Kay credit their longevity to daily support from local residents. Randy, a former contractor, applies his construction experience to help customers solve problems, promising attentive service (he is never on his cell phone at work).

Lander’s General Store is open Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday, 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. The store is currently seeking new booth vendors for the antique section. For information, call 814-226-9688.





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## Double Diamond Deer Ranch offers fun across generations

**SUBMITTED ARTICLE**

For 36 years, Double Diamond Deer Ranch has served as a must-stop destination in Cook Forest, and thousands of ecstatic youngsters have made unforgettable memories bottle-feeding the fawns at this one-of-a-kind attraction. Owners Rusty and Shorty Snyder have raised three generations of whitetail deer at their ranch, and their herd currently numbers 20 animals with new fawns expected in June.

In addition to the traditional dark-eyed, tan-colored variety you see roaming the hills and fields of the Pennsylvania Great Outdoors region, Double Diamond also feature piebald (three-color) deer,

blue-eyed deer, and other interesting variants within their 13-acre enclosure.

This year the number one favorite deer is Duke. He is 10 years old and the current boss of the herd. He is a brown whitetail and comes over to our customers for a pet and a scratch behind the ears. He also eats more apples at Treat Time than any of our deer. So please come and meet him.

From Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, visitors can hand-feed treats to the adult deer 7 days a week at 6 p.m. Our wildlife enclosure includes covered walkways, allowing visitors to see the deer in any weather.

The ranch also features a wildlife-oriented gift shop with fine art and crafts made by local artists as well as an impressive wildlife museum with more than 100 taxidermy displays, plus a kids’ play area with a real fire truck, tractor-trailer, limousine, and police car.

We have totally enjoyed the friendships we have made through the years with our customers. Many of them have been coming back year after year. And we truly appreciate this.

Double Diamond Deer Ranch is open from Mother’s Day weekend through Halloween seven days a week. For more information, go to our face book page or call 814-752-6334. We live and work here all year round.