

The Derrick. and The News-Herald • 2026

BUSINESS

Review & Forecast

Friday, Feb. 13, 2026

Section E — Health Care

Section



Section E of the Business Review and Forecast focuses on the health care industry.

The section features a story on Independence Health System, which includes Clarion Hospital, as the system is transitioning to become part of the WVU Health System in 2026.

Meanwhile, Clarion Hospital had some changes during the past year, including the appointment of Matt Schnur as the hospital's new president, along with other medical/administrative leadership transitions; an update to the MRI suite; and installation of new cardiac monitors in the rooms of intensive care unit patients.

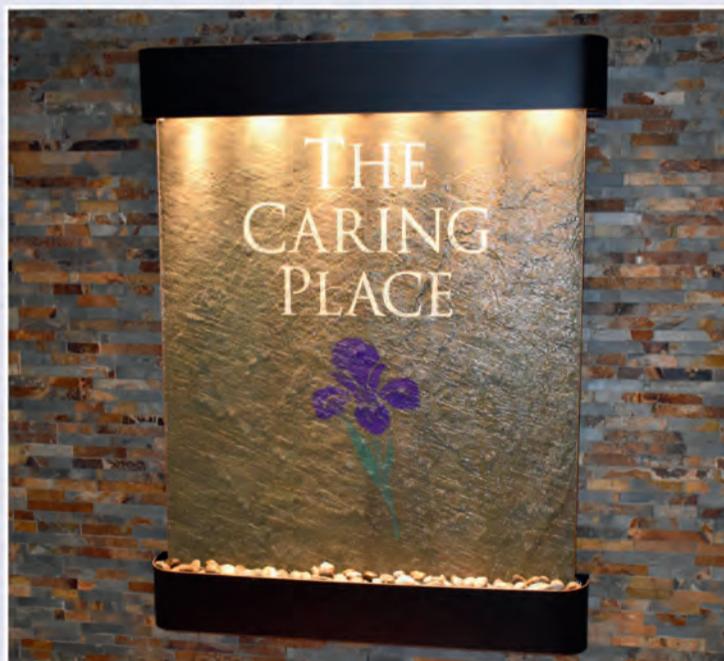
In addition, the hospital's Cancer Center introduced low-dose radiation therapy for osteoarthritis, and fundraising events were held in the community, with money being put toward the purchase of an ambulance.

The section also has stories about UPMC Northwest and Titusville Area Hospital, along with stories about health care businesses and organizations.

Clarion Hospital, along with the whole of Independence Health System, looks to combine with WVU Health System as the two providers transition into 2026. Read more about the upcoming changes on E2.

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Independence Health plans WVU affiliation

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Independence Health System's 2025 year in review reflects a period of significant transition and clinical growth. In November, the system announced plans to join the WVU Health System, pending regulatory approvals.

Under the proposed affiliation, Independence Health System's five hospitals—Butler Memorial, Clarion, Frick, Latrobe and Westmoreland—would operate under the WVU Medicine brand. Leadership anticipates the integration will strengthen regional care and expand specialty services while maintaining local access.

Awards and Accolades

In fall 2025, Clarion Hospital earned an 'A' Hospital Safety Grade from The Leap-



frog Group, placing it in the top 32% of hospitals nationwide. The system's five hospitals were also recognized on the "Healthiest 100 Workplaces in America" list, ranking No. 50 nationally.

Clarion Hospital received the Titanium designation from the Center for Organ Recovery & Education (CORE) for its organ donation awareness efforts. Meanwhile, Butler Memorial Hospital earned the American College of Cardiology's Platinum Performance Achievement Award for the ninth time in a decade.

Clinical Advancements

The system introduced new technologies and procedures

across its campuses:

- **Imaging:** Clarion Hospital added advanced Canon Medical MRI technology with "immersive theater" visuals to reduce patient anxiety.

- **Lung Care:** Expanded lung cancer screening services were launched in Butler and Clarion. Butler Memorial installed a robotic bronchoscopy system for precise biopsies.

- **Dermatology:** Dr. Chad Hendrickson and his team completed their 100th Mohs procedure at Clarion Hospital, a milestone for the skin cancer treatment program introduced just one year prior.

- **Cardiovascular:** The vascular surgery team at Butler Memorial completed its 100th transcarotid artery revascularization (TCAR) procedure.

In June, the Clarion Hospital Cancer Center also introduced low-dose radiation therapy for osteoarthritis. The non-invasive therapy is available for eligible patients over age 50 who have had symptoms for more than three months.

Trinity Point and New Residents

The Health and Wellness Center at Trinity Point continues to expand outpatient services, including cardiology, pulmonology and a Food Institute.

In July, the Clarion Hospital Family Medicine Residency program welcomed four new residents: Ahmed Elsanousi, MBBS; Tae Hyun Kim, MD; Larissa McClain, MD; and Nicholas Smith, DO.

The Primary Care Family Healthcare & Walk-in Clinic offers walk-in services weekdays from 8 to 11:30 a.m. Additionally, the Women's Imaging Center provides walk-in 3D mammography every Wednesday from noon to 4 p.m.

Leadership Transitions

Several key leadership changes occurred in 2025:

- Matthew Schnur succeeded the retiring Karen Allen as president of Butler Memorial and Clarion Hospitals.

- Dr. Michael Fiorina was named chief medical officer following the retirement of Dr. Carol Fox.

- Anthony Cancro was named chief development officer.

- Kelley Skoloda was appointed chief marketing and

communications officer.

- Erica Schaffer was named chief access officer in November.

Foundation Support

The Clarion Hospital Foundation funded critical needs in 2025, including transferring more than \$90,000 to purchase a new ambulance. The "Handbags for Health" event raised \$20,000 for the ambulance fund; the 2026 event is scheduled for Feb. 7.

Other upcoming dates include the "Driving For Community Health" golf tournament on July 31 and the deadline for healthcare scholarships on Feb. 28.

For more information or to explore services, visit www.independence.health.

Clarion Hospital highlights growth, WVU partnership

BY RANDY BARTLEY

Staff writer

While recent news about Clarion Hospital has focused on Independence Health System becoming part of WVU Health System next year, several other noteworthy changes have also occurred at the hospital this year.

In her report at the recent Clarion County Economic Development Corporation meeting, Leslie Walters, CRNP at Clarion Hospital, listed some of the recent "positive changes."

One important addition to the hospital was updates to its MRI suite. "That is really important because there were tests we were not able to provide. Now we are able to offer those tests at the Clarion Hospital," she said.

Aside from the specific types of tests they could do, Walters added that they now had an open MRI, which was more comfortable for patients. "There is also a device that allows patients to listen to music or watch a favorite movie," she added.

Another change was the installation of new cardiac monitors in the hospital's ICU patient rooms, a change which Walters said would allow for improved monitoring so that patients able to get up and move around could do so safely.

To raise funds for Clarion Hospital, Walters said a number of Foundation events were held in the community in the past year, which they put towards the purchase of an ambulance.

In addition to raising funds for the hospital, they had also worked to raise funds for others.

"We just finished our second annual Caring Angel program, and we were able to raise over \$10,000 that will be used for charity care for local families," said Walters.

A change in leadership also occurred this year, as the hospital's new president Matt Schnur started at his position in April.

"He has been in the Butler Health System for 14 years and has been in the Clarion Leadership Team, so he brings a lot of experience and knowledge about the Clarion Hospital," Walters said. Schnur is currently the president of both Butler and Clarion hospitals.

WVU Health System

Walters said the Letter of Intent with West Virginia Medical — an academic system that currently has 25 hospitals in West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania — will have "positive results" locally.

"Most importantly, they have hospitals in rural areas. That's important because that is who we are. They are in Pennsylvania already, with hospitals in Uniontown and Westmoreland," Walters said.



Photo by Randy Bartley

Leslie Walters, of Independence Health Care, provides an update on the Clarion Hospital at the annual Clarion County Economic Development Corporation meeting on Tuesday.

"What does that mean for Clarion Hospital?" she asked. "It means we have their commitment to maintain the existing Independence Health System hospitals; to maintain the programs we already have, and not just maintaining, but growing and expanding those programs."

She said WVU Health System has a history of investing in local communities, noting that

the system was devoted to having larger hubs like Westmoreland and Butler. "So while we may not have a particular specialist in Clarion, they could be close by."

On the business side of things, Walters said that the new system would be investing a minimum of \$10 million in Clarion.

"We will see a lot of changes, but I think

they will be positive," she said. "We will be able to provide quality care in our community."

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

Titusville Area Hospital celebrates 125 years, renovates ICU

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Titusville Area Hospital (TAH) celebrated 125 years of service in 2025. In honor of the milestone, TAH hosted a celebration and unveiled a History Wall in the main hallway, detailing the facility's evolution.

The hospital earned multiple recognitions during the year, including a five-star rating from the CMS patient survey for nurse communication and hospital cleanliness.

Renovations and Upgrades

One of the year's notable projects was the renovation of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), which had not undergone major aesthetic updates in more than 30 years.

The project, which began in May 2025 and was completed in three weeks, included new flooring, fresh paint, upgraded room features, modernized storage and an updated nursing station.

"We are incredibly grateful for the support we received throughout this renovation and are pleased with the result," said Holli Wolfe, vice president of operations. "The atmosphere of this space is essential to helping our patients feel comfortable."

New Providers and Services

TAH expanded access to specialty care by welcoming several new providers. Shawn Leslie, M.D.,



joined Oil Valley Medical Group, and McKenna Cole, C.R.N.P., joined Oak Street Pediatrics.

Physician Services expanded with the addition of ENT specialist Catherine Polincina, M.D., and Brittany Masterson, P.A.-C., in primary care. TAH also introduced two new services: audiology with Devon Zurovchak, Au.D., and podiatry with Timothy Scott, D.P.M.

New in 2026 is the addition of dermatology with Lindsey Thompson, C.R.N.P.



Future Projects

Two major projects are underway to enhance community access to care.

The hospital purchased the former Rite Aid building in Titusville to house a new Outpatient Therapy Center. Scheduled for completion in 2026, the center will consolidate physical, occupational and speech therapy services. The space will include private treatment rooms and a



Pediatric Sensory Room designed to support children with sensory processing disorders.

The second project will renovate the existing physical therapy building into a TAH Dental Training and Care Facility. In partnership with the University of Pittsburgh at Titusville Education and Training Center and the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine, the clinic will train dental residents, hygienists and assistants.

The expanded clinic aims to

reduce patient wait times, which currently approach six months. It will accept all insurance types, including Medicaid.

"By expanding our dental services and opening our doors as a clinical training site, we're not only improving access to care but also helping to develop the next generation of dental professionals who will serve our communities for years to come," said Lee Clinton, CEO of Titusville Area Hospital.

PRIME Fitness Unveils 2025 Innovations

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

For the past decade, PRIME Fitness has focused on evolving the strength training industry through its patented SmartStrength technology. Entering 2025, the manufacturer continues to expand its reach beyond commercial gyms, targeting smaller studios and the premium home gym market through a growing e-commerce presence.

"While initially targeting the commercial gym market, PRIME has since expanded its reach to cater to smaller studios and premium home gym enthusiasts," said CEO Melissa Griffin.

This shift has led to the introduction of the Prodigy Rack/Single Stack Series, corresponding attachments and a new line of adjustable benches.

New for 2025

Plate Loaded Pendulum Squat: PRIME recently unveiled the Plate Loaded Pendulum Squat, the latest addition to its U.S.-made line-up. The machine is designed with a two-position racking mechanism to accommodate users of various heights and features a back and shoulder pad engineered for stability.

Key technical specifications include:

- An adjustable footplate with eight angle adjustments and eight horizontal adjustments.
- An adjustable counterweight featuring nine settings with plate loading or banding options.
- An adjustable lower safety stop with eight settings in 1-inch increments to ensure user security.

- Weight plate storage and dual loading horns.

This unit joins the company's existing plate-loaded leg equipment, which includes the Hack Squat, Leg Extension, Lying Leg Curl, Leg Press and the Leg Extension/Leg Curl Combo Machine.

Bench Innovations: PRIME has also released the Adjustable Shorty Bench, an enhancement of its original utility-style bench. The unit features wheels for transport, four seat pad adjustments and 10 back pad adjustments, with laser-cut numbers notating the exact degree of angulation.

The bench is compatible with a new suite of attachments, including:

- PRIME Centering Device bracket.
- Adjustable elbow pads.
- Decline attachment.
- Preacher curl pad.
- 45-degree dumbbell cradle (accommodates dumbbells and curl bars).
- Head pad extension.

Vertical storage options for these attachments are expected to launch soon.

Technology

The core of PRIME's equipment remains its SmartStrength technology. This system allows users to manipulate the resistance profile of an exercise, a capability designed to improve mobility, increase muscle recruitment and reduce injury risk by aligning resistance with natural body mechanics.



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Northwest Hospital Foundation details 2025 aid

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

In 2025, the Northwest Hospital Foundation, the philanthropic partner of UPMC Northwest, continued investing in innovative technology, addressing patient hardship needs, funding quality-of-life initiatives and educating the next generation of healthcare professionals.

During 2025, the foundation directed \$20,000 to reduce or eliminate medical debt for more than 150 local patients, providing crucial relief during a year marked by rising household costs and economic uncertainty. Over the holiday season, 50 patients received assistance paying their medical bills thanks to a \$25,000 gift received from the Dr. & Mrs. Arthur William Phillips Charitable Trust.

Additional funding supported new clinical equipment across inpatient and outpatient units, helping clinicians improve accuracy, efficiency and comfort in daily care delivery. Continued upgrades to surgical technology have allowed physicians to continue performing a wide variety of procedures using the newest techniques and practices.

The foundation also expanded its role in enhancing patient experience and community outreach with projects such as the installation of SmartRail folding chairs gifted by the Mary Joe White Estate & Family

for patient rooms on the 2 North, 2 South and 3 West units; upgrades along the hospital's walking trail; and expanded engagement events including Walk with a UPMC Northwest Doc and the donor-exclusive Coffee & Conversation with the hospital president.

The foundation is led by a 17-member Board of Directors. Linder Lusher, Dr. David McCandless, Tiffany Nolf, Gregory Piercy and Alexander Spaid were newly elected as directors in 2025. The foundation's 265-member corporation elected five new members at its annual meeting in October: Michelle Beith, Michael Dulaney, Seth Herrick, Christopher Rakow and Kate Whitling. Corporators serve as community ambassadors to share and support the foundation's work.

2026 Plans

The foundation's 2026 priorities build on the momentum of the past year. Goals include expanding patient assistance programs and pursuing grant opportunities to develop additional palliative care and quality-of-life projects. Additional emphasis will be placed on technological upgrades that keep UPMC Northwest aligned with modern clinical standards.

The foundation also expects to increase its focus on workforce development through targeted scholarships and training initiatives

that help recruit and retain skilled medical professionals in Venango County. The purchase of new training equipment, including an X-ray positioning training manikin for the UPMC Northwest School of Radiology and nursing task trainers for the Learning Resource Center, will assist students and staff in teaching and practicing clinical skills.

In anticipation of increased community need, the foundation will continue seeking financial support for the Patient Hardship Fund, which provides immediate assistance for the essential needs of patients, including medications, basic clothing and durable medical equipment, as well as the Uncompensated Care Fund, which assists those who are unable to afford the cost of their medical care.

What's new

A new nursing scholarship endowment has been established to assist hospital employees seeking nursing education with preference for those working in emergency care and intensive care settings. The Dr. Debra A. Flaherty & James P. Flaherty II Scholarship for Nursing Excellence will open for applications for the first time in spring 2027.

The foundation is funding numerous technological advancements in 2026, including an expansion to the urology service line with

the addition of new, cutting-edge urological surgical equipment, and upgrades to the linear accelerator stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT) machine to allow patients at the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at UPMC Northwest to receive specialized radiation treatments on-site.

A look back

Since its inception over 40 years ago, the Northwest Hospital Foundation has grown to be a leading philanthropic force exclusively supporting UPMC Northwest and the patients it serves in Venango County. Donors have enabled major advancements in equipment, facilities and patient services, helping UPMC Northwest remain strong and responsive despite the challenges facing rural health systems nationwide.

As it enters 2026, the foundation continues to honor that legacy by adapting to emerging needs and partnering with individuals, families and organizations who support the mission of sustaining exceptional care close to home.

Foundation staff include Executive Director Theresa Edder and Annual Giving Officer Juliet Hilburn. The administrative headquarters is located in the UPMC Seneca Professional Building on State Route 257 in Seneca.

For more information, visit northwesthospitalfoundation.org or call 814-676-7920.

UPMC Northwest closes 2025 with record growth, national honors

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

This year, UPMC Northwest's focus on three key

strategic priorities — quality, experience and access — drove double-digit growth across services, reinforcing its role as a health leader and driver of innovation

for Franklin and Venango County.

In 2025, total admissions

increased by 14.6%, deliveries by 26.6% and surgeries by 12.3%. Jonathan Bailey, president of UPMC Northwest, recently presented on the investments, national recognitions and more that led to this year's growth at the annual public meeting.

A year of milestones and momentum

As it continued to grow, UPMC Northwest was applauded for its commitment to quality. The hospital received a CMS four-star quality rating and a Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade "A" for fall 2025. It was also reaffirmed by The Joint Commission in Acute Care and certified as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center.

Serving communities that would otherwise be considered maternity care deserts with nearly 450 deliveries, UPMC Northwest was most recently recognized as a Maternity Care Access Hospital for the second consecutive year by U.S. News & World Report. This year, the hospital also received two silver and two bronze designations from the Pennsylvania Perinatal Quality Collaborative (PA PQC) for its work to reduce maternal mortality across races, ethnicities and regions, especially regarding birthing parents with substance use disorders.

The hospital's stroke program was honored with the American Stroke Association's Stroke Gold Plus award, and the American College of Radiology named UPMC Northwest a Lung Cancer Screening Center of Excellence.

"Every recognition is a testament to the dedication of our team," Bailey said. "We are proud to be a place where quality isn't just a goal but our daily standard. Our staff's compassion and expertise are the foundation of everything we do."

Advancing technology to serve the community. Ensuring the community receives high-quality care from an excellent facility, UPMC Northwest made investments in equipment and construction, upgrading its

HVAC system, replacing 27 stretchers and improving its advanced surgical technology.

"We're always looking ahead," Bailey explained. "Whether it's new technology, workforce development or community partnerships, our focus is on building a healthier future for everyone who calls this region home."

This year, UPMC Northwest also participated in UPMC Bridges, part of the first wave of the effort to unify the system under one electronic health record.

"The successful launch of our Wave 1 Epic installation as part of the UPMC Bridges transformation is a major milestone for us all," Bailey said. "It's not just a technical upgrade; it's a strategic leap forward that will unify our systems, streamline our workflows and ultimately enhance the care we provide to our patients."

Growing the next generation of caregivers

In 2025, UPMC Northwest hosted 10 student nurse interns, hiring nine of them into patient care technician roles after their internships. The hospital also partnered with local school districts to offer the Junior Scholar Program, a co-op program for the next generation of health care professionals, along with career exploration and student mentoring programs.

"Investing in our people means investing in the future of care," Bailey said. "We want UPMC Northwest to be a place where careers are launched and where every team member feels valued and empowered."

Looking forward As UPMC Northwest closes out a year of achievement, the focus remains on continuous improvement and partnership.

"We're proud of what we've accomplished, but we're even more excited for what's ahead," Bailey said. "Together, we're building a healthier, stronger community — one patient, one family, one innovation at a time."

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West Park Rehab marks 25 years with expansion

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

West Park Rehab & Diagnostics celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2025, marking the milestone with significant clinical expansions and a renewed commitment to community health across Venango County.

To support patient needs, the clinic opened a private suite behind its Seneca location dedicated specifically to pelvic health and breast cancer rehabilitation. This expansion provides a comfortable, supportive environment under the care of physical therapist Anneliese Welch, DPT.

The clinic's commitment to professional development also saw significant staff achievements in 2025. Kevin Cheung, DPT, became a board-certified electromyographer, enhancing the clinic's diagnostic capabilities. At the Franklin location, Amanda Macefe, PTA, earned certification as an LSVT BIG Parkinson's therapist, strengthening the team's neurological rehabilitation services.

To meet growing demand, the clinic welcomed Nancy Kardos, PTA, a clinician with 25 years of experience, and Zach Lyons, DPT, a recent graduate of Slippery Rock University.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Moving into the new year, West Park Rehab & Diagnostics is focused on education and prevention. The clinic plans to expand its free live workshops and community outreach to help individuals understand their bodies and feel confident seeking physical therapy as a proactive solution.

The 2026 slate kicks off on Jan. 29 with a "Women's Night Out" event at Cork and Screw. Welch will lead an open discussion on pelvic health and breast cancer rehabilitation in a relaxed environment, supported by other local healthcare and wellness professionals.

The clinic is also growing its personal training services at the Franklin location. This initiative bridges the gap between rehabilitation and long-term fitness by offering medically informed, professional training that supports strength, mobility, injury prevention, and lifelong movement. Additionally, the team is exploring the addition of dry needling services to offer an evidence-based option for pain management, muscle dysfunction, and improved movement.

A History of Growth

West Park Rehab began its journey at the Franklin YMCA before opening its Pone Lane office in 2003. That expansion included the addition of an aquatics pool, eventually leading to the consolidation of the YMCA site.

The practice continued to grow, opening a second location in Seneca in 2017. In 2019, West Park Rehab joined Hands On Diagnostics to expand its EMG and diagnostic services.



Community engagement remains a core priority. In 2025, the team hosted a Wellness Event in April and extended educational outreach

through talks at the Franklin YMCA, Oil City YWCA, and a local senior center. Through these efforts, West Park Rehab & Diagnostics aims to

strengthen its role as a trusted health resource while evolving alongside the needs of the community.



Clarion Forest VNA keeps high ratings

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Clarion Forest VNA Inc., an independent, non-profit home health and hospice agency, is marking more than 50 years of service to Clarion, Forest, Jefferson and portions of Venango and Armstrong counties.

The Medicare- and Medicaid-certified agency provides a range of community-based programs, including home health, maternal-infant care, palliative services and hospice care.

In recent evaluations, the agency's home health program received four out of five stars in patient surveys. Its hospice program, which is separately certified, earned a five-star caregiver survey rating and recorded no deficiencies in its latest Pennsylvania

Department of Health on-site survey.

The agency employs a skilled team comprising registered nurses, physical, occupational and speech therapists, a registered dietitian and medical social workers. The staff also includes a certified wound and ostomy registered nurse.

To help reduce rehospitalizations, the agency offers a wireless telehealth monitoring program at no cost to the patient. The system sends weekly trend reports to primary care physicians and alerts them to abnormalities in vital signs or weight. Educational videos on disease processes are also included in the monitoring service.

The hospice division

provides in-home care and contracts with Clarion Hospital for general inpatient services, as well as with area skilled nursing facilities. The hospice team includes Medical Director Dr. Robert Luderer and hospice physician Dr. Catherine Cunningham. Beyond medical treatment, the program offers spiritual counseling, anticipatory grief counseling, bereavement services and a volunteer program.

The organization also operates VNA Extended Care Services Inc., a separate but affiliated agency offering private duty care. Services include meal preparation, medication reminders, light housekeeping and companionship. These services are typically paid out of pocket or

through long-term care insurance and veterans' benefits.

Within the Extended Care division is the Clarion Forest Adult Daily Living Center. Licensed by the state Department of Aging and the Office of Developmental Programs, the center provides a safe environment for individuals requiring assistance with daily routines.

The handicap-accessible facility offers therapeutic activities, personal care, a noon meal and routine blood work. A registered nurse performs quarterly health checks, and the center provides ongoing support for caregivers.

Clarion Forest VNA is a member of LeadingAge and the National Alliance for Care at Home. For more information, visit www.cfvna.org.

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Seneca welcomes new wellness spa



SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Riverstone Oasis LLC, a new massage therapy practice centered on holistic wellness, officially opened its doors in December 2025. Located in the heart of Seneca, the business aims to provide a "serene escape" where clients can decompress and improve their physical and mental well-being.

Leadership and History

The practice is led by owner and licensed massage therapist Kayla Schmader, who brings 15 years of clinical experience to the area. A 2010 graduate of the Pittsburgh School of Massage Therapy, Schmader practiced in the northern Pittsburgh area for 11 years, where she was named Therapist of the Year in 2018.

Schmader moved to the Franklin and Oil City area in 2021 with her

family to embrace a small-town lifestyle. She waited to open the business until her children were all in school, allowing her to fully focus on client care.

Joining Schmader is Chelsey Ebeling, an Oil City native who graduated from the Great Lakes Institute of Technology in April 2024.

The name "Riverstone Oasis" was chosen by Schmader and her husband, Sonny, to reflect the calming nature of the local river and the use of hot stones in their massage services.

Services and Specialties

Riverstone Oasis specializes in therapeutic massage and craniosacral therapy. The practice highlights craniosacral therapy as a gentle, holistic approach that addresses physical symptoms as well

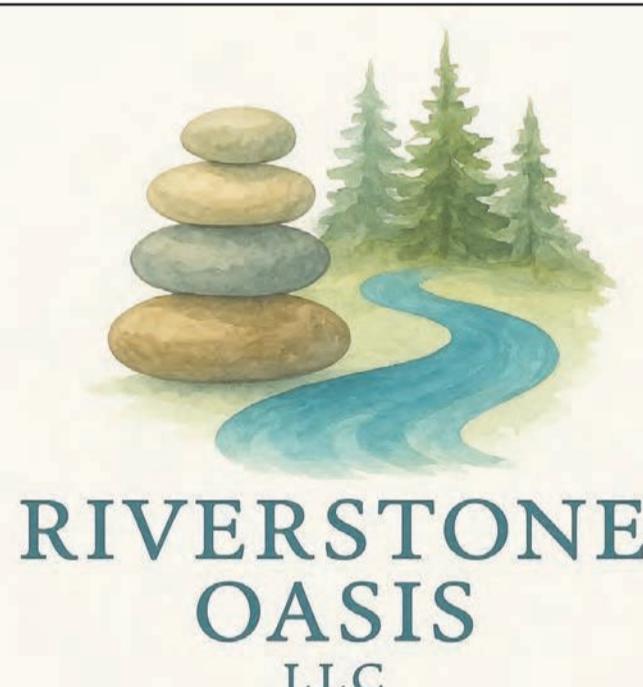
as emotional well-being. By applying subtle manipulation to the cranium and sacrum, the therapy aims to release restrictions and enhance the body's natural healing mechanisms.

The team notes that this therapy can support clients dealing with chronic pain, migraines, TMJ disorders, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, Lyme disease, concussions and PTSD.

Looking Ahead

Entering 2026, the practice plans to host an open house once final renovations are complete.

Riverstone Oasis is also expanding its menu of add-on services to enhance the client experience. Current options include CBD massage, aromatherapy and hot towels. Clients can follow "Riverstone Oasis LLC" on Facebook for updates on the open house and service specials.



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Wagner Family Eye Care completes expansion

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Wagner Family Eye Care has announced the completion of a major office expansion that began in the fall of 2023. The project has increased the practice's capacity and introduced a groundbreaking technology for treating chronic dry eye.

The renovation added two new exam rooms, an enlarged optical area and a larger lab for opticians Elizabeth Marshall and Hailee Fitzgerald, the latter of whom is a newly certified Certified Paraoptometric (CPO).

New Dry Eye Technology

The expansion includes a dedicated treatment room for the Lumenis OptiLight. Wagner Family Eye Care is the first practice within a 90-mile radius to offer this technology, which

manages chronic dry eye and rosacea.

The device works by treating Meibomian Gland Dysfunction (MGD), the root cause of most dry eye cases.

Backed by clinical studies, the technology is recommended as a package of four non-invasive sessions, spaced two to four weeks apart. Each session lasts 15 to 20 minutes. Beyond eye health, the treatment offers aesthetic benefits, including improved skin tone and increased collagen formation.

Advanced Medical Optometry

The practice continues its affiliation with the Diabetic Eye Health Alliance and the Vision Source network. Doctors David A. Wagner, Kelly L. Seibert and Makayli B. Kepple co-manage conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, cataracts and macular degeneration

with a network of specialists.

The clinic utilizes advanced diagnostics, including the Topcon CA-800 Corneal Analyzer and the Daytona Optomap ultra-wide digital retinal imager. They also employ the Heidelberg Spectralis OCT (Optical Coherence Tomography), which measures retinal layers to detect glaucoma and macular degeneration.

For complex corneal issues, the practice offers Prokera amniotic membrane lenses to heal trauma, as well as specialty scleral contact lenses for patients with keratoconus or high astigmatism.

To support retinal health, the practice carries Physician Recommended Nutraceuticals (PRN) and MacuHealth supplements, which are designed to aid in the prevention and stabilization of macular degeneration.

Optical Services and Staff

The expanded optical department features high-performance eyewear, including the OVVO line and the new Nuance line, which is designed for patients with mild to moderate hearing loss.

Wagner Family Eye Care has served as a teaching facility for externs from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University since 2010. The doctors also collaborate with local school districts to diagnose vision-related learning disabilities.

The full team includes Office Manager Holly Schlosser; CPO Technician Assistant Susie Hlawati; Technician Shelly Manson; Billing Specialist Amy Rankin; and receptionists Kathleen Kahle, Kareena Ditz and Sarah Allio. The practice welcomes new patients.

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Simply Skin Medical Spa opens new location at Robinson Town Center

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

As aesthetic trends evolve, Simply Skin Medical Spa is meeting regional demand by expanding its operations to three locations: Clarion, Franklin, and its newest clinic in Robinson Town Center. The practice enters 2026 with a focus on advanced treatments and a patient-first philosophy that blends medical expertise with spa comfort.

Founded to bring evidence-based aesthetics to Western Pennsylvania, Simply Skin Medical Spa has grown into a trusted destination for non-surgical rejuvenation. The practice emphasizes personalized treatment plans using conservative techniques designed to enhance natural beauty and long-term skin health.

Specialized Services and Innovations

The medical spa offers a robust suite of FDA-approved treatments. This includes all six FDA-approved neuromodulators and 18 distinct dermal fillers, allowing clinicians to customize toxin selection and dosing for individualized outcomes.

The practice also features state-of-the-art laser and energy-based therapies for skin laxity, pigmentation, and vascular concerns. Key technologies include Genius RF microneedling, Sofwave ultrasound tightening, Mona Lisa feminine rejuvenation, and fractional resurfacing. The clinic also offers laser hair removal and tattoo removal.

For body contouring and wellness, the spa combines

non-invasive CoolSculpting with Sofwave body tightening. Holistic options include IV nutrient infusions for weight loss and immunity, as well as infrared sauna therapy.

Medical Expertise and Staff

The clinical team operates under the medical oversight of Dr. Cynthia Hoffmeier, a master injector and certified laser specialist with more than 25 years of aesthetic experience.

The multidisciplinary staff includes registered nurse injectors Chellsie Lesniak, Isabella Monarch, and Jade Walker; estheticians Darcy Daly and Isabella Monarch; and licensed massage therapist Chrystal Mohney. Client coordinator

Morgan Clark manages patient scheduling and care.

The team prioritizes ongoing training in best practices, ranging from advanced injection techniques to regenerative protocols such as PRP, Sculptra, and Radiesse.

Patient-Centered Care

Patients at Simply Skin Medical Spa receive detailed consultations that prioritize education and realistic timelines. The practice supports local community initiatives and offers transparent pricing, package plans, and membership options.

To schedule a consultation or learn more about new patient specials, visit simplyskinmedispa.com or call 814-227-2362.



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Eckert Chiropractic rebrands as Peak Restorative Wellness

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

After nearly 15 years serving Northwest Pennsylvania, Eckert Chiropractic has officially rebranded as Peak Restorative Wellness. The name change reflects a shift from traditional chiropractic care toward a comprehensive regenerative health model.

The practice, which operates locations in Oil City and Grove City, recorded a transformative year in 2025, welcoming nearly 600 new patients and expanding its staff.

According to Dr. Eckert, the rebrand was necessary to accurately represent the clinic's evolution. While chiropractic care remains a core service, the practice now

specializes in medication-free solutions for pain relief using advanced medical technology.

New Technology and Treatments

A primary focus of the clinic's expansion is the use of Focused Shockwave therapy. Unlike radial shockwave therapy, which spreads energy superficially, Focused Shockwave targets specific tissue depths.

"Focused Shockwave meets the threshold to be classified as an actual shock wave," the practice noted in a statement. "It allows us to safely treat a much wider variety of conditions and penetrate much deeper."

This technology is utilized for conditions ranging from TMJ and headaches to disc regeneration and wound healing.

In 2026, the practice is introducing several new modalities:

- **Class IV Laser expansion:** A new 30-watt laser featuring a 1064-nanometer wavelength will be added to treat deep joint pain and neuropathy.

- **Halotherapy and Infrared Sauna:** These services will target sinus congestion and detoxification.

- **PMST Loop:** A high-intensity pulsed electromagnetic field therapy (PEMF) designed to aid nerve regeneration and bone growth.

- **Red Light Therapy:** Medical-grade panels featuring eight wavelengths

to reduce inflammation.

Community Impact and Staffing

The practice has grown to maintain a team of 10, recently hiring Emily Toto in the Oil City office to assist with clinical and administrative duties.

However, the year ended with a somber note for the clinic family. In December, the office announced the passing of Bruno, Dr. Eckert's yellow lab. Bruno had been a fixture at the practice since its opening, serving as a greeter and companion to patients for over a decade.

Updated Community Giving

Peak Restorative Wellness

is also restructuring its charitable outreach. In lieu of monthly "Community Days," the practice will now offer eight free treatment slots per week starting in 2026. These slots are available on a first-come, first-served basis for those in financial need, with scheduling opening every Tuesday at 9 a.m.

Dr. Eckert continues to serve the community in other capacities, including an upcoming term as Vice President of the YWCA board.

For more information on the new therapies or to book a consultation, visit www.peakrestorative-wellness.com.

Community Ambulance Service reports 6% call increase in 2025

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Community Ambulance Service (CAS), a not-for-profit agency established in 1967, navigated a high-demand year in 2025 by expanding its fleet and securing federal grants for safety upgrades.

Governed by a seven-person volunteer board of directors made up of community leaders and residents, the agency ensures that revenue generated is returned to the community. Funds are directed toward continued medical and vehicle equipment upgrades, employee medical continuing education, quality improvement programs and numerous other community-minded events.

Operations and Fleet

In 2025, CAS recorded 19,904 customer contacts. While total volume remained steady, ambulance calls increased by approximately 6%. The breakdown of services included:

- 6,906 emergency calls.
- 2,892 non-emergency ambulance calls.
- 10,106 wheelchair transports.

The agency's fleet of 11 Advanced Life Support ambulances and 12 wheelchair vans traveled more than 700,000 miles in 2025. To maintain reliability, CAS purchased four

new ambulances (two box-style and two van-style) and a new wheelchair van.

CAS secured a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Health to aid in these vehicle purchases.

Additionally, a FEMA grant funded the purchase of a Stryker cot-loading assist device and power-load stretcher. This technology is expected to reduce the number of manual patient lifts by more than 1,000 times per year, mitigating back injuries — a leading issue in the EMS field.

Training and Education

In 2025, CAS provided more than 900 hours of community service, including standby coverage at 119 events such as youth sports and the Venango County Fair. The agency also taught 794 people through 61 public classes, including First Aid, CPR and "Stop the Bleed" training.

Internally, CAS continues to upskill its workforce through rigorous education. The paramedic class is approximately one year long and requires many hours of classroom time, reading and bookwork, alongside hands-on training in the emergency department, operating room and on the ambulance.

This comprehensive coursework allows EMTs to receive advanced training, preparing them to handle a wider variety of

emergency calls. Crews are trained to use cardiac monitors, initiate IVs and administer medications, allowing them to better diagnose and treat patients with chest pain, breathing difficulties and stroke symptoms.

Subscriptions and Hiring

In May 2026, CAS will launch a new subscription program. This plan protects households, seniors and nursing facility patients from out-of-pocket expenses, such as rising insurance co-pays and non-coverage for out-of-county transfers.

Like most EMS agencies statewide, CAS faces a manpower crisis. The agency currently employs 32 full-time and 37 casual staff but is actively seeking energetic individuals interested in the field. Residents interested in becoming an EMT or paramedic are encouraged to contact the office regarding training opportunities and financial assistance.

Locations Community Ambulance Service operates three stations in Venango County:

- Franklin: 1010 Buffalo St.

- Oil City: 1502 W. First St.

- Seneca: 3561 State Route 257

To learn more about employment or subscriptions, call the Franklin office at 814-437-3016.



Himalayan Salt & Body launches new services

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Himalayan Salt & Body LLC marked the start of 2025 by transitioning from a boutique retailer into a full-service wellness retreat. Now entering its eighth year at 605 W. State St., the business has paired its signature Himalayan salt therapy with new infrared sauna sessions to create a comprehensive holistic health experience.

The center views the two services as complementary, offering relief for respiratory issues, circulation and stress. The salt therapy sessions typically last 40 minutes in a softly lit, salt-infused environment, while the new infrared saunas feature chromotherapy lighting for relaxation.

"We are always looking to expand our product lines for the best in wellness care," said owner Cindy Conner.

Operating Thursday through Saturday,

the boutique continues to offer appointments and walk-in shopping for wellness gifts. Looking ahead to 2026, the business plans to launch group and corporate wellness packages designed specifically for employees working in high-stress environments.

Business and Home for Sale

Despite the expansion of services, the owners have announced that the business and its historic home location are for sale. The Conners are seeking a successor who appreciates the property's history to continue providing wellness services to the Knox community.

"We have amazing customers who are family to us," Cindy Conner said. "We owe our continued success to our customers who appreciate wellness and enjoy the new products that we find. It's a business that makes you smile every single day."



Wesbury earns top 10 ranking; names new leaders

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Wesbury has been named one of Pennsylvania's top nursing homes by Newsweek magazine for the sixth consecutive year.

In the magazine's "America's Best Nursing Homes 2026" report, Wesbury's Grace Rehabilitation and Health Center earned a No. 9 ranking statewide.

The report evaluated facilities based on performance data, peer recommendations, accreditations and resident satisfaction. According to federal data, there are more than 15,000 Medicare- or Medicaid-certified nursing homes nationwide; the Newsweek report identified the top 1,200.

Leadership Transitions

As the organization enters its 108th year of service, it

also announced significant leadership changes following the retirement of long-time administrator Larry Marsteller.

Marsteller retired in 2025 after 28 years of service. He began his career in 1997 with the Home and Community Based Services program (now Wesbury at Home) and later transitioned into sales and expansion projects before serving as administrator for Personal Care and Independent Living.

Following Marsteller's retirement, Alishia Stevenson, R.N., N.H.A., has assumed the role of administrator for Personal Care (Cribbs Residential Center) and Independent Living (Thoburn Village). She continues her duties as vice president of clinical operations.

Stevenson has served Wesbury for more than a decade in various capacities, including director of nursing, vice president of corporate compliance and administrator of Grace Rehabilitation and Health Center.

To fill the vacancy left by Stevenson's transition, Tanya Bish, N.H.A., has joined the executive team as the new administrator of Grace Rehabilitation and Health Center. Bish brings 24 years of experience as a nursing home administrator.

About Wesbury

Located at 31 N. Park Ave. in Meadville, Wesbury is a nonprofit organization serving more than 500 people daily. It offers a full continuum of aging services, including independent living,

enhanced living and personal care, short-stay rehabilitation, memory support and long-term care.

For more information, visit www.wesbury.com.

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Franklin Jazercise expands classes, childcare

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Franklin Jazercise will celebrate five years of fitness in the Franklin area this summer. Locally owned and operated by Julie Fowler, the business has grown every year of operation by blending functional fitness with a supportive community.

According to Fowler, the studio differentiates itself from a traditional gym through its atmosphere. Members often describe the workouts as feeling "more like a dance party" than a chore, with instructors designing balanced classes that combine cardio and targeted muscle work.

In 2025, Franklin Jazercise expanded both its class offerings and its team. In June, the studio certified a new fitness professional, Susan, who has become a key asset to the staff.

The studio also added a 4:30 p.m. class on Monday evenings. This scientifically backed session is designed to help peri- and post-menopausal women maintain bone density, prevent muscle loss and preserve functional movements. The class has been well received by members as a valuable addition to the weekly schedule.

To support parents, Franklin Jazercise offers babysitting to all members on

Saturday mornings during the 8:30 a.m. and 9 a.m. classes. All babysitters have their clearances and remain visible to family members throughout the entire class.

Looking ahead, Franklin Jazercise plans to continue expanding its course list. The team is currently looking at adding a stretch class to the schedule. This 30-minute session would focus on restoring muscles and maintaining safety.

The studio is also monitoring the need for childcare during evening hours and may expand babysitting to weeknight classes if demand arises.

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Local Novacare Rehabilitation reports continued growth at clinics

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Novacare Rehabilitation, a division of Select Medical, reported growth across its three local facilities serving residents of Venango, Forest, Southern Crawford and Western Clarion counties.

The company maintains locations in Seneca, Franklin and Titusville. The Seneca clinic is located in Seneca Square; the Franklin clinic is on Allegheny Boulevard across from Mac's Snax; and the Titusville location is on South Perry Street across from GetGo.

Specialized Care

While all three locations treat orthopedic injuries, post-surgical conditions and joint replacements, specific clinics offer specialized services.

Seneca: Therapists are trained in the treatment of concussions, neuropathy and post-employment testing.

Franklin: Therapists are trained in the treatment of dizziness and vertigo.

All Locations: Staff are skilled in treating sports injuries, headaches, Parkinson's disease and balance issues to reduce fall risk. The clinics also work closely with pain management centers to assist patients with chronic pain.

Clinical Staff

All three clinics boast a skilled group of clinicians who reside in the immediate and surrounding area.

Manning the front desk as the faces of the clinics are patient services specialists Janie Wornoff in the Titusville clinic, Crystal Dun-

lap in Franklin and Amanda Jackson in Seneca. These three keep the daily operations running smoothly by helping patients with insurance, treatment authorizations and scheduling. Laura Churchill and Mariah Wessel assist as casual staff at the front desk as needed.

Rich Whitney serves as the physical therapist at the Franklin clinic and brings 42 years of health care experience, with 25 of those as a physical therapist. Ellen Stover, who has 35 years of experience as a physical therapist and 39 years as a certified athletic trainer, currently manages both the Seneca and Titusville clinics.

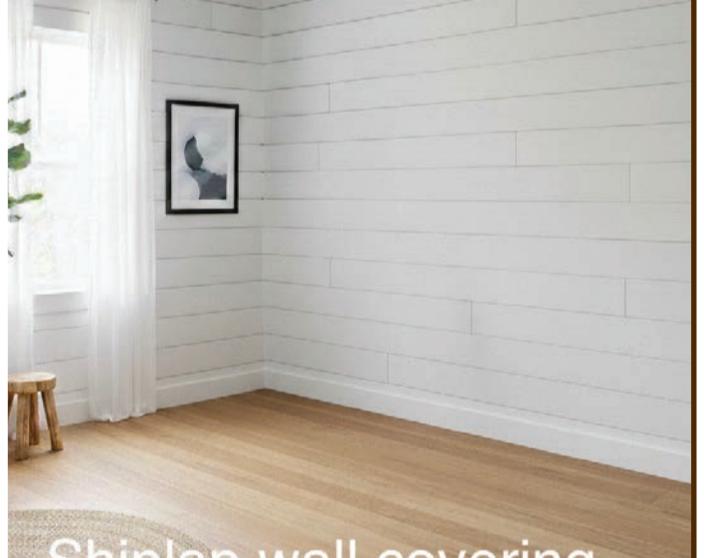
Samantha Dales and Austin Hesselgesser, both skilled physical therapists, are currently assisting in the Titusville clinic. Rounding out the team is a talented group of physical therapist assistants who have primary locations but also travel to help in all three clinics.

Jennifer Mallory, Adrienne Beachy, Lisa Wonderling, Marilyn Orsino and Ann Lowery treat patients and help maintain clinic operations.

Lowery, a talented therapist with 26 years of experience, joined the Seneca staff in April and resides in the area.

Parent company Select Medical is currently searching for physical therapists, assistants and patient services specialists. Open positions are posted at Select-Medical.com.

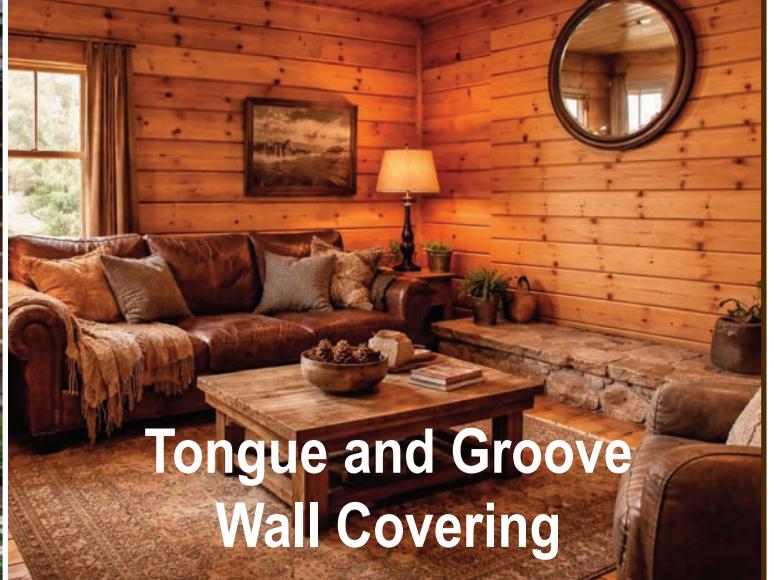
Contact Information for the locations is: Seneca: 814-677-0738; Franklin: 814-432-7200; and Titusville: 814-827-0332.



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