



# BUSINESS

## Review & Forecast

Friday, Feb. 13, 2026

### Section C — Cranberry / Forest County

### Section



The Cranberry Mall's parking lot was full of vehicles last year during the return of annual Cranberry Festival. Read more about events in Cranberry Township on C2. Stories covering other businesses in the area, as well as Forest County and Titusville can also be found inside.

Section C of the Business Review & Forecast focuses on Cranberry Township with features on several businesses in and around the community.

The section starts off with township changes and tension following the 2025 election. There is also a story going over building permit applications and what those trends show going into 2026.

The Cranberry Mall also continues to be an ever-present issue for the community, with more businesses leaving the premises and no sale confirmed as of yet. Still, community members are pushing forward, with new ideas pursuing the structures possible transformation into a recreation center.

There are also stories about some of the staple businesses in the area, as well as the activities of the Cranberry Small Business Association.

You will find stories about businesses in Forest County, as well as an overview of 2025's events in Titusville City Council.

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# What was new in Cranberry?

*There was a lot going on in 2025; township also addressed finances*

**BY DAN GEOHAGAN**  
Contributing writer

Residents of Cranberry Township saw several changes over the course of 2025, including new businesses, completion of township projects, and a new supervisor.

In regard to the board of supervisors, Cranberry businessman Wayne Hepler defeated incumbent Matt McSparren. Hepler attended several meetings during the past year, bringing up and later running his campaign on issues that he said was mismanagement of township funds.

Financial scrutiny was somewhat of a theme for 2025, beginning in February when residents questioned the use of what they claimed were \$5,000 in taxpayer funds for the township’s Christmas tree setup, a number debated by some officials. That sparked a yearlong debate on township spending that Hepler highlighted during his campaign, leading to his push for better financial management.

As part of that message, Hepler recently pushed for

an amendment to the budget in January that will lead to a 0.5-mill decrease on property taxes.

Another big change in 2025 included the return of the Cranberry Festival parade, which had been absent for nearly three decades.

Additionally, the Cranberry Small Business Association hosted its second annual trunk-or-treat in October, which was an even bigger success than the year before.

**Projects and infrastructure**

The Aires Hill Road bridge and the new water treatment plant were completed by the end of 2025.

The approval process for the new bridge started in August 2024 and continued into the following year, facing some significant hurdles along the way.

Supervisors approved a contract for the work in February 2025. However, they later admitted to violating the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act by signing contracts for the

bridge and engineering services without a public vote.

Supervisors Chairman Mike Deibert issued a public apology regarding “misinformation” on the legality of the process, and the board had to retroactively ratify the contracts to ensure compliance before the project could proceed. The completion of the project came to fruition in late October 2025.

The other big project was the new water filtration treatment plant, which was installed near the Cranberry Mall. The project was originally discussed back in 2023 and ran into a handful of obstacles before it was finally up and running toward the end of 2025.

Infrastructure challenges also persisted throughout the year regarding drainage issues at the Cranberry Plaza and Walmart. Broken pipes caused repeated flooding concerns, leading to months of difficult negotiations between the township, property owners and the state Department of Environmental Protection to resolve the matter.

Not all projects, however, moved forward.

The long-anticipated initiative to bring broadband to Hill City and Rockmere faced a complex demise in late 2025.

While the township had successfully partnered with Venango County to secure a \$500,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, the project stalled when ARC reclassified the award from a “construction” grant to a “broadband-as-a-service” grant, forcing a time-consuming paperwork resubmission.

During that administrative delay, the county withdrew its necessary partnership, reasoning the funding landscape had shifted: federal BEAD (Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment) funds had been awarded to the state, and major corporations were already applying to cover the same territories.

Consequently, McSparren confirmed in November that the local grant was canceled to defer to the larger state and federal initiatives.

Aside from the big municipal projects, there were several other projects that took place throughout the township.

The demolition of the Kwik-Fill at the intersection of Routes 257 and 322 began in July after Morgantown, West Virginia-based BFS purchased the property in October 2023.

After the demolition, the construction of the BFS Foods and BFS gas station — which also includes a Dairy Queen on the side of the building — proceeded quickly, with Dairy Queen opening for business last month. BFS also is planning to apply for a liquor license for the location, according to signs posted outside the gas station.

Another big project that came to completion was the new Marshalls, which opened Nov. 20.

**Personnel**

McSparren was unseated by Hepler in the November election, and the transition

into 2026 brought new friction to the board.

In January, a “working supervisor” controversy erupted when the board voted 2-1 to appoint Bob Betzold as a paid employee. The vote sparked concerns from some when Betzold cast the deciding vote for himself after the board was split, with Hepler in favor and Deibert opposed.

Township Manager Sabrina Backer submitted her resignation in November; Melissa Scrivens, the township’s administrative assistant, took on the role of interim township manager and township secretary.

Backer’s departure followed a year of internal tension. Early in 2025, longtime employee Pam Exley was stripped of her “Open Records Officer” title in a split vote before her retirement, drawing public criticism.

After her own resignation, Backer publicly criticized the board of supervisors in January, suggesting members needed “boot camp” and alleging illegal votes were taken during reorganization.

# Cranberry Mall sale remains elusive

*Four more tenants abandon location since 2025*

**BY HELEN FIELDING**  
Staff writer

2025 continued to be a year of uncertainty for the Cranberry Mall as its now years-long sale dragged on and their list of active tenants continued to dwindle.

Nonetheless, the mall continues operations and is still the venue for a number of events, and mall staff have been making efforts to maintain and repair the parking lots and roof.

Currently, the mall has nine tenants, including anchors Ollie’s Bargain Outlet and Dunham’s Sports, and it will likely get back a tenth tenant in February.

Inside the mall proper, tenants include Chiller Night Escape Experience, Maurice’s, Fresenius Kidney Care, Dr. Brooker Regional Nephrology, Jones Party Magic, God’s Little Garden and PA Pride LLC.

The U.S. Army National Guard is also likely to return this year, said Lois McMarlin, who is now office manager at the mall after the retirement of Linda Herbster last year.

McMarlin said that the National Guard left the mall during the government shutdown in the second part of 2025, but that they were planning to come back this year if there wasn’t another government shutdown and their finances were approved.

One of the bigger departures is also the most recent, with Bath and Body Works departing the mall in January 2026. Store management did not comment to the newspaper as to whether another location would open in Venango County or whether its employees would be moved to other locations. An attempt to contact Bath and Body Works’ corporate media

branch was not returned.

During the course of 2025, The Bargain Bin, Two Cousins Pizza and Cranberry Place also left the mall.

The Bargain Bin has a location on Liberty Street in Franklin which was already open, and Two Cousins Pizza constructed a new building next to Hepler’s Meats on the other side of the intersection of Routes 257 and 322.

Cranberry Place, meanwhile, moved to the former Venango Catholic High School, at which various renovations still remain to be completed.

McMarlin said that mall staff had recently started making roof repairs in-house instead of using outside contractors, although they had to “work their way over” from the Dunham’s end to the other end of the mall, and as of early January they were still only partway across.

The mall also completed some spot repairs and paved areas of its parking lot during 2024, including a larger section of paving near Ollie’s. Some patches were put in the road that rings the mall

parking lot during the colder months, using about five truckloads of asphalt, McMarlin said.

**Events**

The mall continues to be the venue of a number of events, including blood drives every two months.

Santa and the Easter Bunny continue to come to the mall for children to see, and three car shows cruised through the parking lot. This year, a truck show also used the mall parking lot.

September brought the annual Cranberry Festival, along with the annual Emergency Services Equipment Display organized by the Seneca Volunteer Fire Department.

This year, the Cranberry Festival was preceded for the first time in about three decades by a parade, which took place on Route 257 this year rather than Main Street.

And in October, a group of local residents organized a candlelight vigil for the late conservative influencer Charlie Kirk on what would have been his birthday. While the

mall was not affiliated with organizing the event, it was held in the parking lot outside the mall.

**Mall sale**

Very few concrete updates have been given throughout the year on the status of the mall sale since the Venango County Commissioners became directly involved with seeking developers for the mall and joining discussions with mall ownership and prospective buyers.

While the commissioners have said several times throughout the year that discussions have been positive and that there have been multiple parties who have expressed interest in the mall property, no details have been given on who the developers or prospective buyers are.

Venango County Commissioner Sam Breene said at a Cranberry Township Economic Development Committee meeting in July that while he wanted to be as “transparent as possible,” he also didn’t want to “mess up any potential

deals” by saying too much.

Breene and Commissioner Ken Bryan, who both attended that meeting, noted at the time that they were looking for responsible buyers that would have a long-term, vested interest in the community and that could fill area needs.

In December, the newly-formed nonprofit Venango Sports & Recreation, Inc. — which was formed to create a community recreation center in Cranberry Township — said that it is eyeing the Cranberry Mall property as a possible location for the center, should circumstances allow.

However, since the mall remains in the hands of California-based Oakwood Management Group and any future ownership is unknown, it remains to be seen whether that hope will materialize or if the mall will remain a retail facility.

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# Seneca Lanes builds on renovation momentum with new leagues

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Seneca Lanes entered 2025 with strong momentum following the completion of major renovations, a move that has transformed the facility into a recreation hub for Cranberry Township and Forest County.

The updates, completed at the end of 2024, created a more spacious environment that drove increased activity in open bowling, group gatherings and private celebrations throughout the past year. One of the most impactful changes was the expansion of the concourse area, providing an open setting for groups to socialize between frames.

The facility improvements have also bolstered the center’s “Fundraiser Friday” program. The initiative allows local nonprofit organizations, church groups and sports teams to host bowling-based fundraisers, reflecting the business’s commitment to local causes.

### Looking toward 2026

Owners Dean and Stephanie Felmlee are entering 2026 with a



focus on league community and expanded tournament play. A highlight of the recent season was the introduction of a “Fantasy Bowling League.” In this format, league bowlers act as team owners, drafting other bowlers to build their rosters. The “Draft Day” event has quickly become a seasonal highlight defined by strategy and friendly rivalry.

Tournament play remains a



cornerstone of the 24-lane AMF facility. The center’s schedule includes the popular monthly Team No Tap Tournament, where a nine-pin count is awarded as a strike. In response to high demand, Seneca Lanes will host its annual Singles No Tap Tournament this February, offering a competitive yet relaxed environment for all skill levels.

For younger bowlers, planning

is underway for the national Kids Bowl Free promotion. The summer initiative allows registered children to bowl two free games daily. Registration for the 2026 program opens in April.

### A 40-year tradition

The Felmlees’ deep roots in the sport began in youth leagues at ages 7 and 8. They have worked



on the business side of the industry since 1984 and became proprietors in 1997.

“The Felmlees feel fortunate to have spent the past 40 years on the lanes with their parents, children and their extended ‘bowling family,’” the organization stated, noting that while equipment and conditions have changed, the focus on the integrity of league play remains constant.

# CS Technologies Plus sees surge of customers moving to Windows 11

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

CS Technologies Plus, a mainstay of the regional tech industry since 1983, reported significant growth in 2025 as it navigated a major industry transition and expanded its service facility in Seneca.

The company, formerly known as Computer Showcase and The Learning Center, saw a surge in business following the October 2025 “End of Life” for Microsoft’s Windows 10 operating system. With security updates no longer available for the older software, sales of Windows 11 systems and specialized data-cloning services spiked.

As an authorized sales and service provider for Lenovo, Acer, HP, Dell and Epson, CS Technologies Plus has distinguished itself from “big-box” retailers through its “white-glove” approach to data transfers and individualized support.

### Expanding service and partnerships

In a major 2025 development, the company signed a contract with a large international IT firm to service U.S.-based customers, increasing the volume of both in-warranty and out-of-warranty repairs. The company

also reported a rise in demand for renewed PCs and custom-built gaming machines, catering to both budget-conscious buyers and high-end performance enthusiasts.

Despite these advancements, cybersecurity remains a primary concern for the region.

“There is not a day that goes by that we do not get a call from someone who has been compromised, hacked or scammed,” said President and CEO Lisa Groner. “It is heartbreaking to see what happens to people and businesses, and we are glad to be here to help.”

Groner noted that the company’s

“complete deep-scan cleaning service” for malware and back doors remains their most requested offering.

**Community business hub**

The company’s facility in Seneca continues to evolve. Recent building improvements include a newly black-topped parking lot and the development of professional office suites. The facility currently houses Kelly’s Precious Palms Massage and is seeking additional tenants for move-in-ready spaces that include free utilities, internet, warehouse access and a full lunchroom.

Through its CSOnline division — the area’s first local internet service provider launched in 1996 — the firm continues to provide high-speed wireless internet, web design and hosting to the Seneca and Cranberry areas.

Looking ahead to 2026, the company is leveraging its partnership with Turing AI Video Systems to offer advanced, AI-powered surveillance for commercial clients.

“I have seen a lot in the past 42-plus years,” Groner said. “I can assure our customers that we are poised and ready for the new IT challenges coming in 2026.”



# Commercial projects total \$2.5M in Cranberry

## Cyber school largest among building projects in Cranberry

BY HELEN FIELDING  
Staff writer

The new Commonwealth Charter Academy administration building along Route 322 was the biggest building project that received a permit in Cranberry Township during 2025, although it was closely followed by two residential structures.

The \$1,047,339 cyber school building was permitted in the middle of June, one of 16 commercial zoning permits issued for buildings, additions, signs, fences and other structures in the township. The total improvement value of commercial building projects during the year was \$2,507,610.

Additionally, 79 residential permits with a total improvement value of \$3,903,673 were also issued in 2025, bringing the total improvement value of zoning permits issued in 2025 to \$6,411,283.

The total improvement value was roughly on par with that of 2023, which was about \$6,500,000, but down dramatically from that of 2024, which was \$31,378,729.

The majority of 2024's improvement value, about \$24 million, came from Cardinal Solar's solar farm, which was constructed from 2024 into last year along Cranberry-Rockland Road.

Other than the cyber charter building and the new Verland home, the only other permit with an improvement value over \$153,989 was the construction of the new 2 Cousins location, next to Hepler's Meats along Route 322.

The remaining commercial permits included several signs, a parking lot expansion, and the addition of T-Mobile equipment to existing cell towers.

However, the year continued the trend of a gradual increase in new businesses in Cranberry, particularly in the retail area near the Cranberry Mall and Walmart.

"Cranberry Township welcomes new development," Zoning and Code Enforcement Officer Regina Deloe said, and that increasing costs of construction and materials "doesn't seem to be stopping people from starting and developing businesses," at least



Photos by Helen Fielding

**The Commonwealth Charter Academy administration building in Cranberry Township, with an improvement value of over \$1 million, is well underway on Route 322. It is next to the plaza that is home to Marshalls, Dollar Tree and Kay Jewelers.**

larger businesses. "I'm not sure how it's affecting small businesses."

Of the residential permits issued in 2025, nine were for new homes, including three mobile homes, one modular home and one new camp or cabin.

Two of the new homes came close in value to the cyber charter building, with one \$1,034,962 new home permitted in April along Rockmere Road, and a permit for the new Verland group home along Steffee Boulevard, issued in February with an improvement value of \$973,000. That structure, though part of a business, was still considered residential, according to Deloe.

The only other projects on the residential side that came in at over \$100,000 were four of the new homes, which



**2 Cousins Pizza, in 2025, constructed a new building next to Hepler's Meats on Route 322. Before the business moved, 2 Cousins had been inside the Cranberry Mall.**

ranged between \$200,000 and almost \$430,000.

The majority of the remaining residential permits were structures such as sheds, outbuildings and garages,

porches and other additions to existing homes, roof solar arrays, fences and swimming pools.

Sixteen demolition permits also were issued in 2025,



**BFS, a new gas station and convenience store that constructed a facility at the intersection of Routes 257 and 322, received the permit in 2025 to demolish the Kwik Fill that had been on the site.**

including some homes, garages, and the old Kwik Fill gas station to make way for the new BFS gas station and BFS Foods at the intersection of Routes 257 and 322.

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# Titusville City Council deals with many changes

BY JOSHUA STERLING  
Contributing writer

The beginning of the new year looks drastically different than the beginning of 2025 for Titusville City Council, after the panel returned to hosting its regular meetings at City Hall, having its composition change in an election that saw two members opt out of reelection, and the exit of its city manager — a role that is proving hard to fill.

When council opened its 2025 slate of meetings, the panel met in a spacious second-floor conference room within the Towne Square Building — a location at which it held meetings since as far back as 2011. The change to Towne Square was noted then as meeting a need for more audience space.

The return to City Hall, after regularly only garnering sporadic public attendance at Towne Square, has seen a return to often capacity audiences.

## Water well replacement

One of the most impactful recurring stories of council business throughout 2025 was the development of a project to replace all 10 of the city's artesian public water wells.

A 2023 inspection of the

wells by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection found two primary deficiencies with the 122-year-old wells — the wellheads terminate below grade and a high level of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), a group of man-made "forever chemicals" used in a wide range of consumer products, such as nonstick pans, waterproof fabrics, firefighting foams and food packaging.

DEP ordered the city in 2024 to either repair or replace the wells to solve the inspection failings. The city determined in consultation with its engineering firm to replace the sources of Titusville's public drinking water.

The project, initially estimated to cost as high as \$28 million, with about \$2 million in advanced financing coming through the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST), resulted in council opening its 2025 docket by increasing its indebtedness according to the loan amount.

The advanced funds were needed to conduct pre-project work, to bring the well replacement into "shovel-ready" status for future grant and loan funding.

Council at its first meeting

of the year passed a resolution to allow hikes to various city services rates and fees to guarantee the debt repayment.

## City manager resigns

Titusville City Manager Neil Fratus resigned his post in September, just as the city's budget process was set to begin. Council has since struggled to fill the position.

Fratus served his last day on the job on Sept. 19 before beginning his new job as Edinboro borough manager on Sept. 22. His exit coincided with the beginning of Titusville's 2026 budget workshop schedule.

To fill the leadership void and maintain operations, council selected Code Enforcement Officer Tim Russell to serve as interim city manager.

Russell helped navigate the city, along with department heads, unions, and finance personnel, through the at-times contentious budget meetings to ultimately land on a plan that raised tax rates, public service rates, and various fees to balance the \$5.8 million budget.

The 2026 budget also included cost-reduction measures that lowered costs by about \$278,000 from the previous year's \$6.1 million budget plan.

More than 10 applications have been received by the city for the open city manager role, which, as of early January, resulted in three interviews but no one hired.

## Code enforcement partnership

After requests from Hydetown Borough, Titusville began providing its code enforcement officer to its neighbor to the west.

Discussions on the partnership were in the works for about a year prior, with the borough expressing a desire to be able to enforce the municipal property maintenance codes it already has on the books.

The city and the borough adopted corresponding ordinances to formalize the partnership, which provides for city code enforcement at a rate of \$39 per hour, billed to the borough, at a maximum of 10 hours per month.

The agreement has an open-ended term, which will be revisited annually, to enact any adjustments that might become necessary, such as the fee paid by the borough.

## Church Run flood remedy

As the city has historically dealt with recurring, damaging flooding resulting

from a stream bed bottleneck at Church Run, which enters the city from the north, council and city administration looked at proposals to solve the problem.

Fratus, who was still city manager at the time, told council at a February meeting that he had submitted a pre-application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant program.

"These funds are intended to support communities in reducing flood risks and improving resilience against future floods," Fratus explained, adding if the pre-application is approved by the federal agency, the city will move forward with a full application — which would include full project planning, engineering, and assessments.

In February 2023, the city awarded a bid to the engineering firm Stiffler-McGraw to conduct a study of the Church Run flooding issue, and draft a feasibility plan. The firm estimated it could cost up to \$66 million to construct an earthen diversion dam, at an upstream opening to divert overflows into a culvert system.

Fratus later told council he planned to seek \$7.3 million

through the FEMA program. However, after later learning this source requires a 10% local match, he determined to not submit the funding request, citing the approximately \$733,000 in local funds being an unfeasible expense.

At an April council meeting, a local forester proposed an alternate and more cost-effective approach to reduce the flood risk while supporting robust biodiversity.

Ryan Thompson, of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, proposed a project whereby certain trees upstream from the city would be cut down and laid in specific locations both alongside and in the stream — a process known as "chop and drop."

"That alone would mitigate so much of the flooding coming into town," he told council.

Thompson described this method of flood mitigation as more closely aligned with natural processes — supporting wildlife habitat and allowing floodwaters to slow enough to soak into the upstream floodplain, acting as a sort of speed bump.

Public discussion on the Church Run flood hazard mitigation has gone no further since Fratus' resignation.

# Cranberry Small Business Association plans, community event growth

## SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Following a milestone inaugural year, the Cranberry Small Business Association is shifting its 2026 focus toward membership visibility and the expansion of its community-centered programming throughout Cranberry

Township and Forest County.

The association officially launched in 2025, marking its debut by hosting a large-scale parade to kick off the annual Cranberry Festival. Building on that momentum, the organization's primary objective for 2026 is the distribution

and publicization of its membership roster, highlighting the diverse range of services local businesses provide to the region.

"Our goal is to ensure the public knows who our members are and the value they bring to the community," the association

stated in its 2026 outlook.

Alongside its business initiatives, the group plans to scale several established community traditions. The upcoming calendar includes the Trunk or Treat event, the Thanksgiving Community Dinner and the "Ride Along

with Santa" program. The association will also continue its signature purse bingo fundraiser, held in partnership with the local fire hall, among various other community-focused activities throughout the year.

The Cranberry Small Business Association holds its

official monthly membership meetings on the second Monday of each month. Meetings begin at 6 p.m. at the Log Cabin Restaurant. Local business owners interested in joining the association or learning more about its services are encouraged to attend.



# Matric Group celebrates record growth year with facility expansion

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Matric Group marked 2025 as a year of unprecedented growth, completing a massive 20,000-square-foot facility expansion and a major infrastructure overhaul to solidify its position as a leader in North American electronics manufacturing.

The expansion at the Seneca headquarters was designed to meet surging customer demand and improve production workflow. To power this growth, the company finalized a substantial electrical service upgrade, increasing the facility's capacity and reliability.

"Matric extends its sincere

appreciation to local and state officials, utility providers and our neighbors for their patience and cooperation throughout the construction process," the company stated in its annual review.

**Unmatched manufacturing technology**

Matric continues to invest in next-generation technology, recently installing four Panasonic NPM-GH Placement Machines and a Heller Vacuum + Nitrogen Reflow Oven featuring 13 heat zones and three cooling zones.

The company noted this equipment lineup is unmatched

among Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS) providers in North America. These investments allow the firm to handle increasingly complex assemblies for the aerospace, defense, medical and transportation sectors.

**Community and career milestones**

With nearly 400 employees across two EMS sites and two warehouse locations, Matric remains a major regional employer. In 2025, the team donated more than \$27,000 to the United Way and provided essential household items to the Family Services &

Children's Aid Society. The company also celebrated its workforce at its annual family picnic at Waldameer, which hosted more than 550 guests.

The year concluded with a tribute to two long-tenured employees. Brothers Todd and Dave Hoover retired after a combined 70 years of service. Todd Hoover dedicated 40 years to the company, while Dave Hoover contributed nearly 30 years to Matric's daily operations.

Looking ahead to 2026, Matric is focused on further enhancing cybersecurity measures and workforce development to remain at the forefront of the global electronics market.



Contributed photo

Members of the River Firework family are, from left, Clifton Rizer, Mary Rizer, Madison Tepke, Christina Tepke and Jacob Tepke.

## Rizer Fireworks plans for biggest year yet with U.S. turning 250

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Rizer Fireworks is preparing for the largest summer season in its 42-year history as the nation approaches the U.S. Semiquincentennial. The family-owned business is gearing up for a surge in demand as families and municipalities plan massive displays for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Established in 1984 by Clifton and Mary Rizer, the company has grown from a humble rented building in Vowinkle into a regional powerhouse with four permanent locations in Marienville, Shinglehouse, Russell and DuBois.

"This will be the biggest 4th of July celebration," said co-owner Christina (Rizer) Tepke. "Everyone will be going all out, and our staff treats our customers like family to help make those summer memories."

shoppers, the store is highlighting its "Buy 1, Get 2 Free" deals and early-bird specials that run through Father's Day. The company has also launched a new gift certificate program for fireworks enthusiasts.

**Technology and infrastructure**

A major focus for 2026 is a technology boost. The company is upgrading its website and mobile app to feature product demonstration videos, allowing customers to see the "burst" before they buy.

Physical improvements are also underway, including parking lot enhancements at the Marienville and Shinglehouse locations and expanded signage in DuBois.

**Beyond the backyard**

While known for retail, Rizer Fireworks remains a premier provider of professional display shows. The company's portfolio includes major regional events such as the Marienville 4th of July Celebration, Horsethief's Days in Knox and the Potter County Fair.

The company is open seasonally from May through September, with appointments available during the off-season. Rizer Fireworks is located at 40147 Route 66 in Marienville. For more information, visit [www.rizerfireworks.com](http://www.rizerfireworks.com) or download their app.

## Bayless Fuel broadens offerings, service area

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Bayless Fuel, LLC, a locally owned supplier of regionally refined fuels, is entering 2026 with an expanded service footprint and a renewed commitment to sourcing American-made products.

The Titusville-based company delivers ultra-low sulfur biodiesel, E-10 gasoline, and clean and dyed kerosene to homeowners and industrial clients throughout Crawford, Forest, Venango, Warren and Clarion counties. To ensure performance in harsh Pennsylvania winters, the company's biodiesel is treated year-round for lubricity and cetane

boost, featuring anti-gel additives effective to minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Retail and industrial support**

Located at 202 S. Brown St. in Titusville, behind Carter Field, the Bayless Fuel retail store serves as a specialized hub for the region's logging and mechanical industries. The facility maintains a large inventory of logging supplies, including chainsaw bars, custom-sized chains, saw chaps and Spencer log tapes.

A key highlight of their service department is the custom fabrication of Gates hydraulic

hoses, ranging from 1/4 inch to 1 1/4 inches. The store has recently expanded its inventory of couplers and adapters to include both standard and metric threads, catering to a wider variety of modern machinery.

Beyond industrial gear, the store features the region's largest local selection of Kinco and Caiman gloves, including a recently expanded line of insulated and leather options for women and children.

**A community focus**

In its annual review, Bayless Fuel leadership thanked customers for their loyalty amid shifting supply chains and rising costs.

The company has responded by prioritizing vendors that provide affordable, reliable products made in the USA, such as the ARGuard line of lubricants refined in Bradford.

The company's growth is supported by a dedicated local team, which recently welcomed new driver Steve Miller to the delivery department.

"Bayless Fuel looks forward to the new year bringing good health and prosperous times to all," the company stated, noting that its pumps at the Titusville location remain available for filling any size can or tank with off-road dyed diesel or clear kerosene.

## Stillers Meats & Smokehouse expands facility

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Stillers Meats & Smokehouse, a cornerstone of the regional food scene, entered 2026 with an expanded facility and a growing team dedicated to the "steady work" of feeding local families.

Throughout 2025, the Seneca-based butcher shop focused on streamlining its operations to better serve its Cranberry Township and Forest County patrons. The interior of the store underwent a significant

redesign, including moving the hot food counter to the main service area to increase visibility of prepared meal offerings. The shop also expanded its front kitchen and added seating, allowing more customers to enjoy meals on-site.

To manage the increased volume, Stillers added four new employees last year across its meat-cutting, meal-preparation and customer-service departments. The team also celebrated a personal milestone when staff

member Rachael welcomed a new baby.

The growth is expected to continue this year. For 2026, Stillers is looking to hire an assistant manager and a part-time cook. These roles are designed to specifically support the company's catering services and the increasing demand for ready-to-eat meal preparation.

Beyond the meat case, Stillers has expanded its retail line to support home cooks and backyard pitmasters. The shop now offers a variety of

house-made rubs specifically for brisket and pulled pork.

For those who process their own meats, Stillers has introduced specialized seasoning mixes for making bologna and meat sticks at home — a move born from the store's deep ties to fresh ingredients and traditional family recipes.

Stillers Meats & Smokehouse is located at 3190 Pa. Highway 257 in Seneca. Customers can visit in person or view the full menu and delivery options at [stillersmeats.com](http://stillersmeats.com).

**Navigating industry changes**

The company successfully navigated shifting trade landscapes and supply chain hurdles in 2025. Despite new tariffs on imports, Rizer Fireworks has already secured more than 90% of its 2026 inventory to ensure shelves remain full. The 2026 season will debut more than 25 new items, ranging from rockets and firecrackers to "repeater cakes" and professional-grade mortar sets.

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