

LBCCC Celebrates its 50th Anniversary!

Since its inception, the Lower Bucks County Chamber of Commerce has been the "Voice of Business" in Lower Bucks County.

Names and faces have changed over the years, but the Chamber's mission remains the same - to advance the principles of free enterprise, to enhance the economic climate of the area, to address the priority needs of its members, and interact with other individuals and organizations for the overall benefit of the business community.

The 1950's

It was the mid 50's and William Levitt had already begun to build thousands of homes on farm land along Route 13 just north of Bristol. As the area grew, so did the need for an organization which would represent the interests of the growing business community. The Bristol and Lower Bucks Chamber of Commerce was that organization. Located on Bath Road and Route 13, the Chamber was active in addressing many issues including the enforcement of Sunday Blue Laws which prohibited retail stores to be open on Sundays. In 1954, the name was changed to the "Greater Lower Bucks Chamber of Commerce" to more accurately reflect the organization's growing service area. It remained that way until 1958 when the Delaware Valley and the Greater Lower Bucks County Chambers of Commerce met to merge their organizations into one..."The Lower Bucks County Chamber of Commerce."

With the newly formed Chamber, dues were established at \$35 annually – today, the Chamber's annual dues for a company with 2-3 employees are \$235. The Board determined that 93 new members were needed to balance the \$10,000 annual budget - the Chamber currently has 1,600 members with an annual budget of \$631,000. Harry Palmer became the first elected President and Earle Tomlinson was the first Executive Manager.

In March 1958, 29 new members were welcomed including future Presidents, David Johnson and Howard MacCorkle. The following month, 12 new members were welcomed including two more future Presidents...Pat Deon and Bim Stahl. Pat Deon served as President from 1967-1968 and Bim Stahl served as the Chamber's 20th President from 1978-1979.

The 1960's

In 1961, Chamber President A. Marlyn Moyer successfully urged the Board to apply for a franchise to conduct a "Miss Bucks County Pageant" as part of the Miss America Program. This activity, which provided scholarships to young women, remained part of the Chamber's work for the next 26 years, until 1987.

The Chamber Board approved a proposal to seek a merger between the Convention and Visitors Commission and the Bucks County Historical Commission.

In 1966, the Chamber got into the publishing business with the debut of its first monthly newsletter. The four-page publication had a very catchy name..."*The Lower Bucks County Chamber of Commerce Newsletter.*"

The Chamber endorsed two highway proposals. One was to widen Newportville-Fallsington (now known as New Falls) Road from two to four lanes between Tyburn Road and Route 413. The other proposal called for a "Thru County" highway to make travel more efficient between Bristol and Doylestown. One out of two isn't bad!

A brand new two-color newsletter "*Focus*" made its debut. And, after three years of lobbying, the Chamber celebrated the opening of the first jug handle left turns in Pennsylvania at Route 413 and 13.

A site was selected for the Chamber's new building as the Board authorized the purchase of land in Fairless Hills next to the United Way building.

The Chamber celebrated its 10th anniversary in 1968 by hosting its first Golf Outing and cutting the ribbon on its new building.

Transportation in Bucks County greatly improved in 1969 as the Chamber cut the ribbon for the opening of I-95. Groundbreaking also took place at Neshaminy Park, the first thoroughbred racetrack in Pennsylvania.

The 1970's

In 1970, the first SEPTA bus service was launched in Bucks County and Warren Likens was on hand to greet the very first bus at Route 1 and New Rodgers Road.

In 1971, Elaine Zettick, Chair of the Convention & Visitors Committee, met with representatives of the Central Bucks Chamber, and the County Commissioners to discuss a proposed Convention Center in the vicinity of Washington Crossing! The goal was to have the Center ready in time for the influx of visitors expected for the 1976 Bicentennial.

The Chamber's Annual Dinner Dance attracted over 400 guests as the first SITAWE (Shot in the Arm with Enthusiasm) Awards were presented.

In 1973, the Chamber endorsed the proposed Newtown Bypass which would divert truck traffic away from the streets of Newtown. Later that year, the Chamber received its first Accreditation from the US Chamber. This designation recognized the Chamber's standard of excellence in organization, programs and level of services.

1976 kicked off with the very first Percolator Club meeting which was hosted by 3M at the Bristol Motor Inn. The 77 people in attendance indicated a strong desire to continue this event.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 1978, the Chamber received congratulatory messages from President Carter, Governor Sharp, Senator Heinz and Congressman Kostmayer. And, Bim Stahl was elected as the Chamber's 20th President.

In 1979, Lower Bucks County made the national news as hundreds angrily protested long gas lines and high prices at Five Points in Levittown.

The 1980's

A Chamber delegation flew to Washington, D.C. for a full day in the capital which included meetings with Congressmen Richard Gephardt and Al Gore.

The Chamber was rocked by two sudden deaths as Warren Likens died while attending a meeting to discuss his retirement. Richard Moore succeeded him as Executive Director. Another Chamber leader, Ted Mitchell, perished while piloting his plane. For many years, he had flown Chamber groups to Harrisburg and Washington, D.C. In their memory, the Chamber building was dedicated to Mr. Likens and a new award was established for Mr. Mitchell.

That summer, the Chamber entered the technology age with the purchase of its first computer....a new Vector Graphic with a dot matrix printer!!

The Convention & Visitors Committee, chaired by Clark Shuster, hosted a Familiarization Tour of the area for group tour leaders.

The first Business Contacts Reception was held in 1984 at the Bucks County Courier Times. Don McCoy was elected our Chamber President and would serve two terms. A few months later, another "BCR" attracted nearly 200 people to the Holiday Inn. Everyone agreed that this was a great way to meet other business people. This activity soon became known as the Business Card Exchange.

In 1985, Clark Shuster became the Chamber's new Executive Director.

Don McCoy asked Dr. Joe Ferderbar, Superintendent of Neshaminy School District, to chair the new Business Education Partnership Committee. The Chamber also became an official SBA Resource Center! It was anticipated that the center would be a first step toward the formation of a SCORE Chapter in the area.

In 1985, following a contest where members submitted entries, a new logo made its debut! The three interlocking sides represented the Chamber's service goals of Business, Education and Community.

Though he was 90 minutes late, nearly 200 people stayed to hear Tug McGraw speak at the Perc meeting! Everyone agreed it was well worth the wait as Tug entertained with tales of his baseball and business experiences. Tug would join a long list of celebrities who have come to the Perc. over the years including Ed Rendell, Ron Jaworski and Bill Bergey.

On St. Patrick's Day 1988, the Chamber welcomed over 800 people from across the country to the Government Procurement Fair at the Bucks County Office Center! The year was also highlighted by the election of the first woman to serve as our president, Maryann Pazdan!

Bucks County SCORE Chapter 570 opened for business at the Chamber. Through the efforts of dozens of volunteers, SCORE has provided business counseling to thousands of Bucks County citizens over the past 20 years!

That fall, the Chamber was in the forefront as the national media descended upon Bucks County to hear Vice President George Bush speak to a luncheon audience. Phones at the office never stopped ringing as 700 tickets were sold for the event in less than a week!

The 1990's

The 90's began with a new publication for our Chamber called *Outlook*. *Outlook* replaced Bucks Fortune and has since grown into one of the finest you'll see anywhere.

Members and staff gathered in Cape May for the first planning retreat held out of the area. A new mission statement was developed that defined the Chamber as an organization serving the business community.

Each issue of *Outlook* now featured an invitation to the new "BOSS" Seminars. Now known as "Sharpen Your Edge," these programs gave members an opportunity to learn more about business from experts in the field.

Through the vision of President Peter Dominick, the Chamber launched a new Leadership program which was modeled after others from across the country. Now in its 17th year, Leadership Bucks County is still going strong.

The Transportation Committee "adopted" the 1-95 and Route 1 interchange. Thanks to dozens of volunteers over the years, tons of trash has been removed from one of the busiest interchanges in the area!

In 1992, the Chamber continued to broaden its regional influence, as 300 members welcomed Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell to the Perc meeting.

As Bill Clinton swept the Democratic primaries on his way to the White House, while the Chamber spoke out in support of the proposed room tax which would provide greater funding for the Bucks County Tourist Commission to promote the area.

The Legislative Action Committee and their Chairman, Charley Martin, greeted Channel 10's Larry Kane as moderator of the Congressional Debate between Peter Kostmayer and State Senator Jim Greenwood.

The Chamber joined with other organizations to help form the Bucks County International Trade Council which would assist firms in exporting their products.

After many years as our legal counsel, Jim Sutton became the Chamber's new president in 1993!

In July, Commissioners Mark Schweiker, Andy Warren and Lucille Trench addressed the "State of the County" at the Perc. This tradition remains one of the most popular events on the Chamber's calendar.

After the severe winter of '94, the first "Career Women on the Move" Seminar was held. The event featured two themes..."Entering and Reentering the Workforce," and "Moving Up the Corporate Ladder."

While many Americans were tuned into OJ Simpson's trial....Kathe Belsky's term as President was highlighted by debates concerning the future of our building. It was apparent that the Chamber needed a larger facility.

Republicans swept the '94 elections and Newt's "Contract With America" was on the front page...and at a special Board meeting that spring, plans to expand and renovate our building at Hood Boulevard were approved! That fall, a groundbreaking celebration took place as construction began.

In 1995, two past presidents, Peter Dominick and Kathe Belsky were married!

Thirty inches of snow from the Blizzard of '96 did not deter the expansion of the Chamber building as construction finished ahead of schedule. That May, hundreds gathered for the dedication ceremony!

Harold Oswald assumed the Presidency as our Chamber was getting used to a new home! For the first time in 39 years, our Chamber could properly accommodate its own Board of Directors for a meeting!

While America hosted the Olympics, President Clinton won reelection. And, voters agreed with the Chamber's support of the Open Space referendum and the bond was passed.

In 1997, many of us knew nothing about the Internet as our Chamber entered the world of cyberspace with a brand new web site!

The following year, we celebrated our 40th Anniversary. Dan Bates chaired the task force which planned a celebration at the Perc and an open house in September. Led by President Steve

Wallin, nearly 500 people visited our Chamber as we opened our doors to neighbors from throughout the community.

As the year 2000 approached, businesses everywhere were trying to prepare for the impending Y2K crisis. President Arlene Blosch wisely formed a new Technology Committee. The group hit the ground running by hosting a series of informational seminars to help members prepare.

Joining with Mayor DiGirolamo and other leaders, our Chamber stepped forward to support the formation of a transportation advocacy organization. Shortly thereafter, the Bucks County TMA was formed. Through the support of many Chamber members, and the leadership of Bill Rickett, TMA Bucks has become one of the most effective groups of its kind in the country.

After decades of delay, the ribbon was finally cut to open the exit ramp from I-95 southbound to Route 413, a mere 27 years after the Chamber first supported this project!

A strong economy for 2000 was forecast by Fred Sherman as the popular radio personality entertained over 200 people at the last Perc of the 20th Century.