



# CATALYST

Economic  
growth ahead  
in Happy Valley

How downtown  
State College is  
thriving as other  
downtowns fail

New PSU sports  
facilities are an  
investment in  
area economy

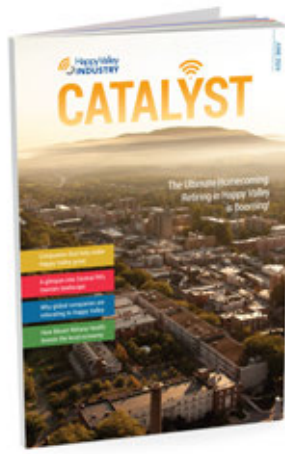
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The regional  
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“Thank you for illuminating all the amazing stories from business owners in the Happy Valley region of Pennsylvania — and it’s so cool that the Centre Daily Times picks up your best stories and runs them in the Sunday paper. We’ve heard from so many people, all over the country, that they learned about our company from the HappyValley Industry newsletter. I didn’t realize Penn State alums read the weekly newsletter or see it on LinkedIn. Thanks!”

– A State College business owner

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# CATALYST

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

*“It’s easy to make lists of problems. Of everything that could go wrong or get worse. I could do it with my eyes closed, and so could you...”*

*It’s much harder to have the imagination and the courage to talk openly about what might go right. What might improve. What unexpected thing could have a remarkable impact on how we work and live and change things for the better...*

*...The good stuff creeps up on us, occurring slowly and quietly in the background as we gradually (and unobservantly) grow acclimated to it without even realizing... The media has no vested interest in reminding us of it.*

*...But the optimists are eventually proven right. Not every day, but always and eventually. Indisputably. It just takes a while to be able to see it play out... Being optimistic all the time is difficult. But having any other disposition as a default setting makes little sense when you’re investing for a future far out in front of us.”*

– Excerpt from *Optimism as a Default Setting* by Josh Brown, financial advisor, writer, content creator, TV personality, podcaster, investor, founder, and dad

My favorite line in these excerpts is about the media. It’s true there’s plenty of bad stuff to fill the news cycle day after day, but there is plenty of good, too, if you choose to see and focus on it. That’s our whole gig at HappyValley Industry... accentuating the positive about the incredible place we all call home for our families and businesses. And the overwhelmingly positive response we had to our inaugural issue of Catalyst proves there’s plenty of other believers.



With local leaders taking stock in the area’s strength in innovative business sectors, like sensors and materials, and tackling challenges head-on, major collaborations are in the works to grow our regional economy. The area is on pace to welcome 5 million visitors in 2024, with major investments at Penn State in the facilities that provide thousands of jobs and inject millions of dollars into our thriving tourism industry.

Prominently featured in Pennsylvania’s new tourism campaign, the Great American Getaway, Happy Valley shines as a jewel in the Alleghenies region.

Between Penn State and strong local trade and technology programs, Happy Valley is training the next generation of talent and filling the gaps in our regional workforce. The addition of Penn Highlands and new Mount Nittany Health facilities are adding to our growing healthcare landscape.

Happy Valley is having a pinch-me moment, and we’re here for it. Our goal is to not only shine a spotlight on this positive progress, but also to highlight the local services and suppliers whose solutions are working behind the scenes to make it happen. Interested in partnering with us to accentuate your positive? Reach out about our next issue and our weekly eletter.

We’re excited to keep delivering the good stuff to readers. Send your ideas to me at [Greg@AffinityConnection.com](mailto:Greg@AffinityConnection.com).

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**Cover Photo:** Abby Drey

# Centre County's path forward: A vision for vibrant growth

On October 9, the CBICC launched an Economic Development Strategy aimed at addressing the county's economic challenges while leveraging its unique assets to foster a resilient and diverse economy.

The 2024 Centre County Economic Development Strategy brings together four high-level priorities to shape the region's future: Business Retention and Expansion, Targeted and Emerging Industries, Workforce and Education, and the Built and Natural Environment. These interconnected priorities form the backbone of a comprehensive strategy for economic development, positioning Centre County as a beacon of resilience and opportunity.

## Fueling growth through targeted opportunities

"When we look at Centre County and the region, there are so many good things happening here. We have an incredible opportunity right now to harness our unique strengths to continue to thrive as a community, become more competitive, and reach our full economic potential," said CBICC President & CEO Greg Scott.

Scott, a Centre County native, cited strong community connection and pride, a high quality of life, and innovation coming out of research and educational institutions as a strong foundation for the region's economic development. These strengths supported the county's recovery from headwinds faced during the Covid-19 pandemic including workforce, infrastructure, and population challenges.

"We became aware that we needed a comprehensive, collaborative plan to capitalize on our region's strengths and drive us toward future economic prosperity," Scott said. "We're going to lean into attracting and retaining businesses of all sizes, breaking down our siloes, and focusing on true collaboration across our community."

One solution the plan hopes to achieve is closing the gap between workforce housing supply and the ever-growing job market. To address this, the plan proposes increasing the availability of attainable housing units across all municipalities by 2030. Furthermore, improving transportation infrastructure will be key to connecting population centers with industrial and business hubs, enhancing the overall quality of life while supporting business growth.

The plan also identifies opportunities to advance built infrastructure and increase the availability of adequately equipped industrial sites. By enhancing site readiness and improving connectivity between key transit routes, Centre County can accelerate its economic progress. Supporting air service retention at the State College Regional Airport is another critical driver, aimed at ensuring businesses and residents are well-connected.

Vice President of Economic Development for the CBICC Todd Dolbin explained that the plan will take a regional approach to solutions to address both local residents and individuals in the Centre County workforce traveling from outside the county.

"We are excited for the opportunities this plan presents for us to expand our brand regionally, especially since a lot of our workforce commutes in from outside our county border," he said. "This plan aims to develop our unified brand that targets different audiences and promotes our county's values and identity."

## A call to action: Shaping the future together

The 2024 Centre County Economic Development Strategy is a bold blueprint for the future. Its success depends on the collective effort of

local businesses, institutions like Penn State, government entities, and most importantly, the community. Together, we can build a thriving, resilient economy that sets Centre County apart as a leader in innovation and economic prosperity in Pennsylvania.

"Centre County is a great place for businesses of all sizes, people of all ages, and workers in all industries," Scott said. "What we have here is a community that has all the potential to work together and to think about all the different roles we will have in moving this plan along. I'm excited to see how that evolves and translates to results and action."

This vision needs YOU. Whether as a resident, a business owner, an educator, or a community partner, your involvement is crucial. By embracing this plan and rallying around a shared goal of growth and prosperity, the community can unlock Centre County's full potential. Let's work together to ensure Centre County isn't just keeping pace with change — it's leading it. This is the place to be. This is the move forward.

## What can you do NOW?

Visit [www.centrecountyforward.com](http://www.centrecountyforward.com) to sign up for special communications about the plan so that you can stay informed and get involved.

## About the plan

Developed by the CBICC in collaboration with over 100 stakeholders, the plan is the result of extensive research and engagement efforts that took place between November 2023 and September 2024, including meetings of the 50+ member Economic Development Council, focus groups, personal interviews, and deep data analyses to get a clear and comprehensive picture of Centre County's economic landscape.

CBICC leaders stressed that, with its organization at the helm, the plan is a coordinated effort among leaders of businesses of all sizes, community members, and residents from across Centre County representing a collaborative

mission to work toward growth and economic prosperity.

"In working toward this plan, our goal was to create a common and coordinated vision—unlike anything that's been done in the last 25 years in Centre County — that provides a roadmap for smart economic growth," said CBICC President and CEO Greg Scott. "The process was set up to be deliberate about fostering synergy among the many organizations and partners in the region who participated."

Vice President of Economic Development for the CBICC, Todd Dolbin, emphasized that the group set out to develop clear, strategic goals and ensure that the plan is actionable, accountable, and sustainable.

"Ultimately," he said, "We cast a wide net on input for the plan in order to engage and energize the entire community, inspiring collaboration and cooperation to achieve common goals."

Scott added, "Declarations of support have already rolled in from key strategic partners, like Penn State, Centre Region COG, individual townships, and others. In fact, our plan closely aligns with similar efforts initiated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania earlier this year, so county leaders have been working in collaboration with State officials to ensure that our focus areas are complementary and enhance one another."

The Centre Region Council of Governments staff is excited to support this plan's initiatives, from streamlining resources for businesses to providing outstanding outdoor recreation. By working together, we can ensure that Centre County remains a thriving hub for innovation, education, and economic opportunity.

Ben Estell, executive director of Centre Region Council of Governments said, "This Economic Development Strategy represents a regional vision for fostering smart economic growth in Centre County. It is a collaborative roadmap that aligns with many of our regional priorities. The COG will be examining the plan for ways to include elements of its findings and goals into our Comprehensive Plan."

“The economic development plan is a big step forward for our county. This plan was a collaborative effort amongst businesses, government entities, and Penn State,” said Amy Farkas, township manager in Patton Township. “It lays out a blueprint to help us attract and retain new businesses and industries and also addresses workforce concerns, including attracting employees and the important role attainable housing plays in workforce development. We look forward to working with the CBICC and the stakeholders on the implementation of the plan.”

“The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau appreciates the collaborative process that has occurred

in developing a comprehensive economic development strategy for the county,” said Fritz Smith, HVAB president and CEO, and a member of the Economic Development Council that helped create the plan’s framework and priorities. “Visitation is a proven economic driver for Centre County. Our work, along with the work of the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance, is essential to maintaining and growing a strong economy and excellent community quality of life. We very much welcome the opportunity to combine our ongoing tourism economic development mission with the efforts of the CBICC and other industry sectors to ensure a thriving environment for business growth and job creation in Happy Valley, PA.”

## What does the Centre County Economic Development Strategy entail? A shared vision for economic growth and prosperity

### Business Retention and Expansion

*Local and regional business support, entrepreneurship and innovation, and statewide synchronization.*

**Goal A:** Streamline and expand resources for early-stage businesses.

**Goal B:** Prioritize consistent business engagement with entrepreneurs and high-growth companies.

**Goal C:** Synchronize business retention and expansion efforts with state, national, and global initiatives.

### Targeted and Emerging Industries

*Targeted industries, new business attraction, and leveraging commercialization.*

**Goal A:** Develop and promote a brand identity for Centre County.

**Goal B:** Develop a Sensor Technology Industry Cluster.

**Goal C:** Amplify the role of Penn State in the community to optimize its economic impact.

### Workforce and Education

*Workforce development, talent attraction, and talent retention.*

**Goal A:** Create targeted talent development and attraction initiatives.

**Goal B:** Formalize a network of Centre County employers committed to addressing workforce needs.

**Goal C:** Expand and assess career pathways and awareness among all education providers.

### Built and Natural Environment

*Downtowns, sites, infrastructure, housing, tourism, and outdoor recreation.*

**Goal A:** Amplify Happy Valley as Central PA’s tourism, outdoor recreation, and sports destination hub.

**Goal B:** Pave the way for more attainable housing units.

**Goal C:** Invest in placemaking and social gathering spots throughout the county.

**Goal D:** Invest in site readiness projects.

## State College Food Bank’s \$3 million capital campaign helping fulfill a growing need in a new facility

The State College Food Bank is now fighting food insecurity at its newest location at 169 Gerald Street in College Township. Gifts to the capital campaign, “Fighting Hunger, Feeding Community, Building Hope,” exceeded the project’s \$3 million goal, granting the essential nonprofit organization mortgage-free status and enabling staff and volunteers to concentrate their resources on fulfilling their mission: to provide food security to people in Centre County.

The new space is 18,000 square feet, more than double the size of the previous space on South Atherton Street. The facility includes a large loading dock as well as ample storage space, plus more refrigerated storage for fresh items like meat and dairy products. These upgrades have allowed the Food Bank to accept larger deliveries and consolidate storage into a single

location, making it easier to redistribute food to programs across the county.



According to Executive Director Allayn Beck, community generosity has helped the organization to make the vision for the new space a reality. “We want to extend our deepest thanks to everyone who made it possible. Your support is truly changing lives and building a stronger, more hopeful community,” she said.

To support the State College Food Bank, visit [scfoodbank.org](http://scfoodbank.org).

## State College Area Meals on Wheels delivers more than meals – it’s a lifeline

State College Area Meals on Wheels has gone far beyond the mere delivery of meals; it has become a lifeline for many within the community, embodying compassion, care, and community support. Dedicated volunteers selflessly devote their time to preparing and delivering not just nourishing meals but also companionship to those who might otherwise feel isolated or forgotten. These visits extend beyond tangible delivery; they bring warmth, conversation, and a sense of connection, combating loneliness and fostering a stronger sense of community.

For many recipients — often elderly, disabled, or homebound — these meals are a vital source of nutrition, ensuring they receive well-balanced, quality food. This not only addresses physical hunger but also contributes significantly to their overall health and wellbeing.

State College Area Meals on Wheels acts as a vital link between recipients and the greater community. It creates a network of support that goes beyond the boundaries of a simple meal delivery service. Families find solace in knowing their loved ones are cared for, volunteers find fulfillment in making a difference, and the community flourishes through the culture of compassion fostered by this program.

State College Area Meals on Wheels shows the profound impact that small acts of kindness can have on transforming lives and strengthening the fabric of a community.

To make a difference with a gift to Meals on Wheels, visit [scmow.org](http://scmow.org).



# Penn State's Materials Research Institute solidifies Happy Valley's status as a brain belt, hub for industry-boosting research

Penn State is one of the world's leaders in materials research — and the Materials Research Institute (MRI) is at the heart of it all. Here, from the institute's home in the Millennium Science Complex, a range of disciplines converge.

The Complex itself is impressive. The Millennium Science Complex was completed in 2012 after 10 years of planning and three years of construction.

The 297,000-square-foot research facility was one of the most complex construction projects in the University's history. It's designed to the exacting standards of a world-class laboratory for imaging on the atomic level, and nanofabrication in stringent cleanroom conditions. The northern wing of the building is devoted to materials

science, while the west wing of the building houses researchers in the life sciences and neural engineering. The two wings are joined on several levels to facilitate interactions and collaboration between the two disciplines.

It's not just academia and research that find themselves here, though. The complex also calls to industry leaders looking for solutions and, within the institute, various facilities and centers speak to more niche materials specializations.

Such is the case with the Silicon Carbide Innovation Alliance (SCIA), announced earlier this year, and described as "a coalition of industry leaders, academic institutions and government

support with a focus on becoming the nation's central hub for research, development, and workforce training in SiC crystal technology."

The Alliance will be based out of the Penn State Materials Research Institute and is just the latest example of the university's dedication to excellence in materials research. The Alliance is more than research — it also will help fill

a massive talent shortage, and bring industry opportunities to the Commonwealth. Furthermore, according to its director, the Alliance and the associated onsemi Silicon Carbide Crystal Center will be unlike anything else in the country, and like few other places in the world, and will include manufacturing processes that represent the most extreme environment on earth, heating graphite and SiC "sand"

to temperatures that reach nearly half the temperature of the surface of the sun.

## Becoming the national centerpiece for silicon carbide material science

For the average layperson who doesn't know their silicon from their silicon carbide (two materials that are vastly different, according to the Alliance's industry liaison officer, David Fecko), Alliance director Joshua Robinson gave us the quick definition.

"Think of it as silicon on steroids," he said. Silicon carbide is the material that will replace silicon in electric vehicles, electrical grid, and power

electronics and, as silicon carbide is highly superior due to its efficiency, and it's a material that will be necessary for the clean energy transition. In short, it's the future.

In fact, you probably have similar technology on your desk or in your pocket right now. If you have a fast-charging cell phone charger, components in that system are made with similar silicon-on-steroids technology. Similarly, if you've ever used a Tesla Supercharger, you've experienced the power of silicon carbide.

*"The goal is to advance workforce development, educate our students and upskill or re-skill incumbent workers, so that they can move from oil and gas or from other industries, into this industry that is poised to continue to grow at greater than 20% annually, to more than \$20 billion by 2030. We want to be the national centerpiece for silicon carbide material science and engineering."*

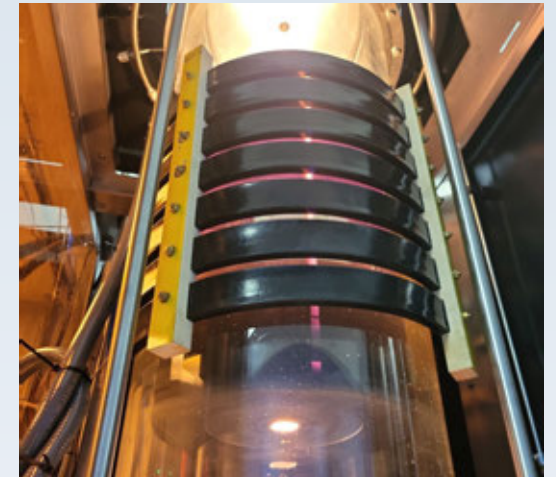
Despite this superiority, efficiency and necessity, Robinson said that accessible U.S. research around silicon carbide crystal manufacturing had waned in recent history. So why was this the perfect time for Penn State to jump into a more or less abandoned area of academic research, focusing on manufacturing silicon carbide?

Robinson explained: "It comes down to funding. Research goes where the money is. In the 90s and early 2000s, there was a significant amount of government funding to develop this material for defense applications... Companies then took the knowledge from that government investment and started commercializing it, developing it for LEDs and high-powered devices."

These companies focused on their own IP and silicon carbide remained an industry focus, rather than a research focus — and then the "gray tsunami" began. With more and more industry professionals retiring, and little research leading to workforce development and training, private industry realized it was coming upon a problem.

Companies had worked hard to protect their IP, but now they had no trained workforce to work on that IP.

"Companies are struggling," said Robinson. "There are companies that want to hire hundreds of people, and they just can't find the workforce." This is what brought a leading manufacturer, onsemi, to Penn State to establish the onsemi Silicon Carbide Crystal Center — a centerpiece of the Alliance.



Providing this workforce is one of the new Alliance's aims, as it creates workforce development opportunities for all levels, from certificates and two-year degrees on up, which includes developing partnerships with leading workforce providers like the Pennsylvania College of Technology.

"If you look at the needs of the workforce, we are going to need four to five times the number of technicians than we are [individuals with] advanced degrees. These people running the tools, doing the measurements and collecting data — those are the ones we need a lot more of," said Robinson.

Another one of the Alliance's aims is to bring in new industry partners and expand existing industry partnerships, such as Penn State's long-standing partnership with Morgan Advanced Materials, which is now a founding Alliance partner.



Photo: Penn State Materials Research Institute (MRI) / Jamie Oberdick

After achieving these goals, the overall result will impact not just Centre County, but the entire Commonwealth, and then the country.

Robinson summed up, “The goal is to advance workforce development, educate our students and upskill or re-skill incumbent workers, so that they can move from oil and gas or from other industries, into this industry that is poised to continue to grow at greater than 20% annually, to more than \$20 billion by 2030. We want to be the national centerpiece for silicon carbide material science and engineering.”

For now, the Alliance is renovating its facilities and prepping its curriculum to provide hands-on training, in anticipation of a more formal Q1 2025 kickoff, at which point it will begin research and training projects based on its industry members (industry members will be able to vote on the research projects the Alliance undertakes).

**The best place to get up close and personal with the Materials Research Institute’s latest endeavors: 2024 Materials Day**

Penn State’s Materials Day is an event that connects Penn State talent with companies and shares Penn State’s latest research and discovery with industry, government and service partners.

The event is designed to share Penn State’s vast materials research knowledge and infrastructure with industrial and government research and service partners, so attendance is critical if you’re looking to stay abreast of Penn State Materials news or if you are looking to identify graduating students for future positions.

Materials Day is also focused on interaction and discussion among attendees. Industry reps can talk with students and faculty about their company, creating connections and visibility that benefit the company as they announce job openings or come to career fairs.

*“Penn State is one of the leading universities in the country in terms of Materials Research. Materials Day is a great way to get an overview of all of the great programs and research projects that are happening at this moment in time.”*

Attending companies can also see what faculty are working on, leading to potential research collaborations or connections with graduating students. In addition to the external collaborations, Materials Day is also a chance for Penn State groups to collaborate internally or form teams to apply for grants and proposals.

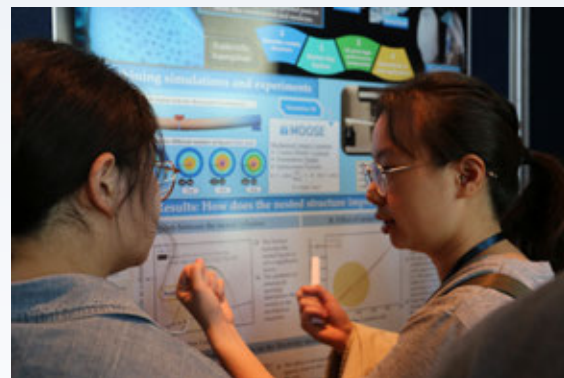


Photo: Penn State Materials Research Institute (MRI) / Bessie Floresgomez Murray

# 2024 MATERIALS DAY

**When:** Oct. 29–30, 2024

**Where:** HUB-Robeson Center and the Millennium Science Complex, University Park, PA

**Registration:**  
[www.mri.psu.edu/mri/events/2024-materials-day](http://www.mri.psu.edu/mri/events/2024-materials-day)

*Penn State’s 2024 Materials Day is coming up! This year’s theme is “Convergence of Materials, Data, Manufacturing, and the Human Dimension” and the event will include keynote speakers, breakout sessions and several networking opportunities, among other highlights.*

## Materials research, high tech and innovation – Happy Valley’s status as a brain belt destination centers on Penn State

In industry and research over the last decade, the term “brain belt” has grown in popularity as a way of describing regions where the cost of doing business is relatively low, but resources like those offered by a research university are ample. In many instances, these regions boast a low cost of business because of existing infrastructure from traditional manufacturing — turning the locations from Rust Belt into Brain Belt, from Upstate New York to North Carolina’s Research Triangle.

Right in the middle is Happy Valley. Happy Valley has Penn State — one of the greatest research universities in the United States with its abundant resources, from facilities to labor, available at a fraction of the price of what companies could get elsewhere.

David Fecko is director of industry research collaborations at Penn State’s Materials Research Institute, so a large part of his job is connecting industry with the university’s resources, including materials-oriented facilities, faculty or research. According to Fecko, Happy Valley is most certainly a brain belt destination in terms of materials.

“Access to truly high-end facilities draws companies that are interested in materials to this area of Pennsylvania,” he said. “As an example, Penn State has always had a strong presence in the area of electroceramics, things like transducer materials for ultrasound. This region has a lot of companies that manufacture medical ultrasound devices and that’s all due to the fact that Penn State has had a very strong program in ceramics for years.”

# Nittany Lion Love *with a dash of luxury*

Visitation is up in Happy Valley. In 2023, the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau set an audacious goal of welcoming 5 million visitors by the end of 2024. As of a July announcement from the Bureau, that goal has already been met, and it's estimated that the county has reached its additional goal of \$1 billion in visitor spending as well.

With all of this additional visitation, travelers need a place to stay, and area hotel construction projects and renovations are here to deliver. One such project is particularly of interest to Penn State alumni and those who've frequented Happy Valley over the decades. The Nittany Lion Inn, a staple on the area hospitality scene, was purchased by Scholar Hotels in 2023 and, this fall, debuts to the public with a new look that brings the property into the modern era, while still retaining its classic, Penn State feel.

## A staunch dedication to the spirit of The Nittany Lion Inn

At the helm of The Nittany Lion Inn's overhaul is Gary Brandeis, one of the most notable entrepreneurs and figures in the hospitality industry in State College. He's the founder and CEO of Scholar Hotels, which owns and operates both the Hyatt Place and The Scholar properties in downtown State College. In 2023, Scholar Hotels took up the challenge of renovating both The Nittany Lion Inn and The Penn Stater Hotel.

As a graduate of Penn State with a B.S. in accounting from the Smeal College of Business, Brandeis originally worked as a public accountant and became fascinated by real estate through his many real estate clients. Eventually, Brandeis founded Real Estate Capital

Management LLC in 2005, and acquired his first hotel in 2006, before deciding to fully pursue a hospitality career. His Hyatt Place project — which was the first new hotel in downtown State College in over 30 years — inspired Brandeis to create Scholar Hotels, which specializes in hotels located on or near major college campuses and now has properties across the country.



“What we saw during the project were the benefits of owning and operating a hotel that is close to a major college campus. The consistent, reliable demand driven by a university is a game changer for the hotel business that doesn't happen in many places,” said Brandeis. “It's a business where we feel we have a much bigger hand in creating value. That's why we were so attracted to hospitality.”

*“It is absolutely crucial that we retain the history and keep the spirit of The Nittany Lion Inn alive.”*



When bringing his broad expertise to The Nittany Lion Inn, Brandeis was staunch about one thing, from the very beginning.

“It is absolutely crucial that we retain the history and keep the spirit of The Nittany Lion Inn alive,” said Brandeis. “I think The Nittany Lion Inn is the second-most important building on campus after Old Main. When you look at the history of The Nittany Lion Inn, the importance of the building to Penn State, the State College community, alumni, administration, and ultimately a new audience that will be attracted to the hotel due to the quality of the renovations, it is very important that we retain the historical aspects of the building but make it new, modern and convenient.”

So how has this commitment played out?

## You're not going to want to host your clients, meetings or conferences anywhere else

Today, the inn's guestrooms are classic but modern, with Penn State nods that are sophisticated rather than kitschy. Think a Nittany Lion doorknocker, artfully chosen prints depicting a local landmark or a settee in Penn State blue. Larger rooms — up to king suites — are available and come with all the amenities you need for a comfortable football weekend or business trip; think free WiFi, work areas and in-room coffee.

Room rates are moderately priced, starting at around \$200 per night, though, as can be expected, prices increase over football weekends.

*“I think The Nittany Lion Inn is the second-most important building on campus after Old Main.”*

Beyond the rooms, its iconic dining experience combines its history with new and thoughtfully designed eateries. Lionne is the new pièce de résistance, serving unpretentious yet upscale farm-to-table fare that highlights the robust regional agriculture scene. The nearby 1855 Lounge complements Lionne with innovative cocktails and a wine selection that honors the Inn's longstanding reputation for a top-tier wine program.

For something more casual, Triplett's offers an upgraded bar experience, with a patio and lively atmosphere, and, during the day, Dear Joe: Café and Bakery provides quick grab-and-go eats, as well as counter-service bites that you may linger over a little longer; like Lionne, Dear Joe also focuses on local ingredients.

The property's overall mix of tradition, Penn State pride and contemporary luxury also make for an excellent locale for business meetings and events, whether you're sharing a drink with a colleague at Triplett's or sharing the latest in Penn State innovations from within the Inn's 300-attendee-capacity ballroom. The close

proximity to the university, as well as broader downtown, is convenient as well, and getting to the State College Regional Airport requires a 10-minute drive, at max. Whether you're hosting a client for a few days or a large event, this is where you're going to want to do it.

### Hotel offerings in Happy Valley are just getting better

It's not just the iconic Nittany Lion Inn that's getting a new life. Sister property The Penn Stater Hotel is as well. With its additional conference space and location at Innovation Park, it's long been a favorite for business events and meetings. However, The Penn Stater's planned renovations aren't quite as dramatic as those seen at The Nittany Lion Inn.

The Penn Stater Hotel is much younger than The Nittany Lion Inn, having finished its second phase of construction in just the early 2000s. The renovations planned for The Penn Stater will be

more of a refresh compared to The Nittany Lion Inn's renovations. According to Brandeis, guest bathrooms, flooring, furniture, fixtures, food & beverage options, wall coverings and lighting will be the primary focus.

"Hotel offerings in the State College market will be much improved by 2025 to 2026," Brandeis summed up. "The hospitality business is about creating great experiences for your customers. We are so fortunate to have such amazing properties in a variety of forms in State College and our goals will always be to create these experiences for everyone that we are privileged to serve."

Book your stay at the new Nittany Lion Inn at [thenittanylioninn.com](http://thenittanylioninn.com), and stay up-to-date on the latest happening at The Penn Stater at [thepennstaterhotel.com](http://thepennstaterhotel.com).



# Getting around Happy Valley: It's easier than you think

The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau recently announced that the region had marked a significant milestone: 5 million visitors and \$1 billion in visitor spending. Originally, the organization had hoped to reach this milestone by the end of 2024, but as of the end of 2023, the goal had already been reached.

According to the 2023 Longwoods International study, Centre County reached a record 5-million person trips last year, which is a 3.1% increase over 2022. This total includes 3.2 million day trips, and 1.8 million overnight trips.

*"We're seeing a record number of visitors and there's no doubt it's by vehicle."*

The region's tourism leaders are hardly resting on their laurels, though, with sights set on 6 million visitors by the end of 2026. (Optimistically, Dave Gerdes, the Bureau's vice president of sales and marketing, says "it's not out of the realm of possibility to achieve that [goal in 2025].")

### One of the area's primary draws?

Just how easy it is to get around.

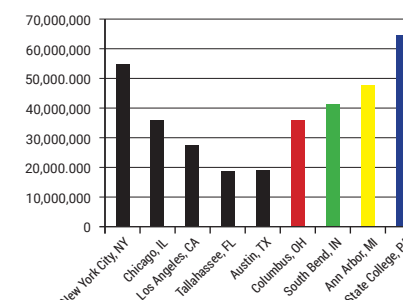
"The preferred mode of transportation here is by vehicle..." said Gerdes. "We're seeing a record number of visitors and there's no doubt it's by vehicle."

He noted that visitors to the region frequently marvel at the lack of traffic in Happy Valley and added, "I think people appreciate that when they're trying to get out of their chaotic lives and the big cities."

There are plenty of people who can easily drive to Happy Valley, too. Approximately 75 million people live within 300 miles of the region, coming from destinations such as New York City; Philadelphia; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; Cleveland; Toronto; and Buffalo. Columbus, Boston, and western New England are also within easy reach.

	250 MILES (4 hrs)	350 MILES (6 hrs)
New York City, NY	56,339,060	77,641,300
Chicago, IL	36,819,350	56,193,810
Los Angeles, CA	27,989,430	36,743,700
Tallahassee, FL	18,882,880	31,207,600
Austin, TX	19,534,680	28,378,860
Columbus, OH	36,724,400	80,524,380
South Bend, IN	42,429,100	60,008,200
Ann Arbor, MI	48,675,030	65,060,190
State College, PA	66,059,520	93,403,160

Population within 250 miles



"We're fortunate to have the majority of our [Penn State] alumni live inside that [radius], too," said Gerdes. "They're the ones with the emotional attachment to the area... and they know how short [a drive] it is to get here."

As such, the Happy Valley Adventure Bureau has spent time cultivating a presence within the radius that contains those major population hubs, promoting Happy Valley's "three A's."





Photo: Centre Daily Times

As Gerdes explained, “We’re very affordable, we’re very accessible and we’re very accommodating. That accessibility, since Covid, is really important to people.”

**It’s not just driving to Happy Valley that’s a benefit, though...**

Once visitors make it to Happy Valley via private car, they’re pleased with the ease of getting around the area as well. Driving from small town to small town, attraction to attraction, is simple and quick, and parking is much the same.

As Happy Valley transplants have told us based on their own experiences battling the traffic in other areas, getting around Happy Valley is ultra-convenient. As Centre County Commissioner Amber Concepcion said, “You’re able to spend more time working or more time with your kids, more time getting involved with the community, because you’re not losing the two hours a day that we spent commuting [in Washington, D.C.]...It really adds up over time. If it’s two hours a day, it’s 10 hours a week. That’s time that you weren’t getting in a run or taking your kids to something.”

Even for those visitors who aren’t traveling by private or rental car, though, getting around is easy, thanks to services like those offered by The Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA), including CATABUS, CATAGO!, CATACOMMUTE and CATARIDE.

CATABUS Community Service consists of 14 community bus routes that provide service between Downtown State College and the Penn State Campus and suburban shopping centers, apartment complexes, residential areas, governmental offices and many other special points of interest. CATAGO! on-

demand transportation serves the Boalsburg, Houserville, Lemont and Centre Area West zones of Happy Valley, Monday–Saturday. CATACOMMUTE makes vanpool options available for commuters in the greater State College area. CATARIDE provides origin-to-destination transportation primarily for persons 65 and over and persons whose disabilities prevent their use of the CATABUS system.

In total, CATA removes 13,698 cars from the road on weekdays, clearing up to 38.14 miles of traffic, equivalent to three Manhattans in length. On weekends, 4,454 fewer cars mean 23.25 miles of potential traffic is avoided.

**“When you look at the population density that’s within a drive — and it’s 75 million — there’s a lot of potential there.”**

**This is just the start...**

While 5 million visitors and \$1 billion in visitor spending seems like a lot — and it is — there’s still much more that Happy Valley can accomplish, in terms of bringing visitors to the area.

“When you look at the population density that’s within a drive — and it’s 75 million — there’s a lot of potential there,” said Gerdes. The key, he noted, is to keep Happy Valley current and relative, highlighting the great things to do in Happy Valley both seasonally and year-round.

## Sustainable, seamless service: Travel Happy Valley with CATA

Whether you’re a long-time regional resident or a first-time visitor, if you’re traveling around Happy Valley, chances are the Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) can take you where you need to go. Serving the community for 50 years as of 2024, CATA is the third-busiest transportation authority in the state and provides nearly 5 million rides per year.



**CATA offers four key services: CATABUS, CATAGO!, CATARIDE and CATACOMMUTE.**

**CATABUS** consists of 17 bus routes that provide service throughout the Centre Region including the Penn State campus, suburban shopping centers, apartment complexes, residential areas, governmental offices and many other special points of interest. Riders can plan their trip and find their bus using real-time information by downloading the myStop app.

**CATAGO!** is a curb-to-curb, pick-up, micro-transit and on-demand service where riders can easily schedule their rides by calling or via app. CATAGO! offers transportation in Boalsburg, Houserville, Lemont and Centre Area West and service is available Monday–Friday, 6 a.m.–8 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m.–8 p.m.

**CATARIDE** provides origin-to-destination transportation primarily for persons 65 and over and persons whose disabilities prevent their use of the CATABUS system.

**CATACOMMUTE**, in partnership with Commute with Enterprise, supports vanpool options for commuters in the greater State College area. These services provide innovative and

sustainable shared mobility options to residents and employees who travel to the Centre Region in Centre County from several surrounding counties.

For visitors to State College specifically in town for Penn State football home games, CATA also offers Game Day football shuttles, with routes that provide continuous service between some area hotels, downtown State College and Beaver Stadium. Shuttle service begins three hours before kickoff and runs continuously until one hour after the game is over — and fare is only \$2.20 per trip, the same as CATABUS Community Service fares.

Through all of these services, CATA removes nearly 14,000 cars from the road on each weekday, clearing up to 38.14 miles of traffic, equivalent in length to three Manhattans. On each weekend day, 4,454 fewer cars mean 23.25 miles of potential traffic is avoided, reducing the need for building more roads and highways.

Removing private vehicles from regional roadways leads to a greener, healthier Happy Valley, but that’s just a portion of CATA’s sustainability efforts. CATA was also the very first transit system on the East Coast to convert its entire bus fleet to alternative fuel, saving millions of metric tons of CO2 each year. Currently, CATA is saving 243,093.45 metric tons of CO2 and 35.333 metric tons of NOx from our environment each month.

*Learn more about CATA’s services at [catabus.com](http://catabus.com). You can also download the CATAGO! app and the myStop app via the App Store or Google Play, to begin riding today.*





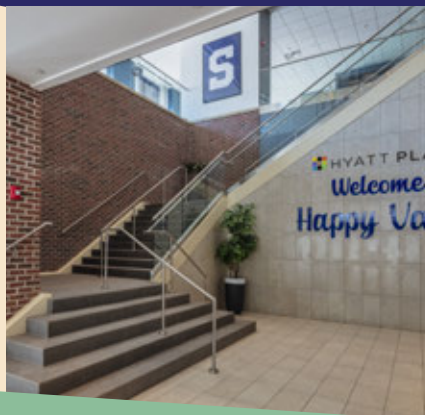
THE  
**HAPPY VALLEY**  
ADVENTURE BUREAU

# 3.6 MILLION VISITORS

WELCOMED BY OUR REGION THROUGH AUGUST,  
PACING TOWARDS TARGET OF  
5 MILLION FOR 2024

# #1 IN PA

HAPPY VALLEY IS RANKED NO. 1 IN THE STATE  
FOR REVENUE PER AVAILABLE ROOM (REVPAR)  
GROWTH SINCE EARLY 2023



# \$800,000

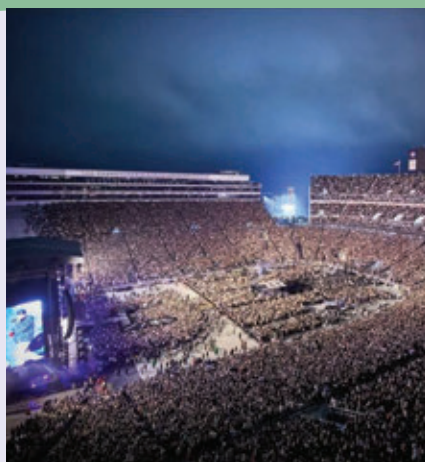
ANNUALLY SPENT TO PROMOTE  
HAPPY VALLEY, PA  
AS A  
YEAR-ROUND DESTINATION

# \$317 MILLION

ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT FROM ARTS, CULTURE,  
AND ENTERTAINMENT ESTABLISHMENTS, INCLUDING  
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## How the Entrepreneurship & Innovation Minor is a game-changer for students in an AI-driven world



The future of humans in an AI-driven world will center around qualities that machines can't replicate: creativity, empathy, adaptability, and the ability to execute. AI can do a lot — analyze data, generate insights, and create plans — but it can't take action, build relationships, or innovate with a human touch. As AI takes over more routine tasks, the value of our future workforce lies in our ability to create meaning, lead with vision, and execute those plans with resilience and purpose.

Where traditional educational models often lag behind the changing demands of the modern workforce, Penn State's Entrepreneurship and Innovation Minor is setting a new standard by offering students the chance to combine academic theory with practical, real-world applications. The program is equipping students with the entrepreneurial mindset needed to navigate a dynamic global economy where AI and automation are making rapid advancements.

"Our students are learning to be action-oriented problem solvers," said Ted Graef, Engineering Entrepreneurship Program director in Penn State's School of Engineering Design and Innovation. "We like to say we're fostering a mindset, preparing students to navigate a business world that's innovating fast and demanding a new set of skills."

"While the courses do provide entrepreneurial business knowledge for students seeking to start companies or be part of startups, they also cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset that complements credentials in engineering and, really any field. We are teaching the skills that today's thriving businesses are seeking in their employees," Graef said.

Higher education has traditionally focused on theory-heavy curricula; Penn State's ENTI minor is flipping this model on its head. Through a combination of interdisciplinary coursework, hands-on projects, and experiential learning, the program encourages students to apply classroom knowledge to actual business, societal, and technological problems.

Courses help hone uniquely human skills like creativity, digital literacy and interdisciplinary knowledge. "Projects are designed to give students opportunities to evaluate different perspectives, make ethical decisions, and solve complex challenges through questioning and experimenting," said Greg Woodman, Adjunct Professor of ENGR310, Entrepreneurial Leadership, a key course in the minor. "The work encourages students to think beyond conventional boundaries and bring the spark that turns ideas into new realities — something AI can't do."

"Skills like emotional intelligence — empathy, communication and collaboration — these are in high demand for leadership positions in every industry, especially as AI evolves," explained Frank Koe, teaching professor in the School of Engineering Design and Innovation. "We engage students in real-life circumstances where they learn to deal with ambiguity with adaptability and resilience."

Finally, students in the minor learn the importance of executing, said Brad Groznik, assistant teaching professor in the program, "AI can give us strategies, but humans still need to make it happen. Execution requires resilience, hard work, and courage. Students are placed in real-world situations, learning to manage change and challenges as opportunities, not as threats."



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# Happy Valley's role in the Alleghenies

In the state of Pennsylvania's new tourism brand, the Great American Getaway, Happy Valley is featured prominently as a key destination in the Alleghenies region. The Alleghenies includes Centre, Cambria, Blair, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juniata, Bedford, and Fulton Counties and is a prime stop for visitors seeking a blend of natural beauty, outdoor adventure, and rich history.

Happy Valley offers some of the biggest draws in the region, including college sports, arts and culture, small-town charm, and more. Tourists have spent over a billion dollars in Centre County in the past year, illustrating that the Happy Valley region is a standout location for year-round fun for families and travelers of all ages.

The Pennsylvania tourism campaign highlights attractions like the Penn State Arboretum, the Berkey Creamery, and other attractions for unique recreation opportunities and cultural experiences that rival big cities. The area also benefits from the amenities and attractions in surrounding counties.

With natural beauty at the forefront of the campaign, Happy Valley's popular spots like Tussey Mountain and Rothrock State Forest are featured alongside other Alleghenies-based

gems like Blue Knob State Park and Raystown Lake, which offer countless activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and fishing, catering to both thrill-seekers and those looking for a peaceful retreat. Raystown is popular with Penn State football fans who choose accommodations like lodges and lake houses to enjoy more rustic surroundings and be farther from crowds.



The Alleghenies are also steeped in history, with numerous sites that tell the story of America's past. The campaign highlights experiences with Centre County history in its charming small towns like Bellefonte and Boalsburg. These opportunities attract visitors who also find sites with similar appeal in towns like Bedford, located just over an hour from State College off

of I-99. Old Bedford Village, for example, is a living history museum that features structures and live demonstrations that tell the story of 18th and 19th-century life in the Allegheny Mountains.

Wineries, breweries, distilleries and cideries in Happy Valley are also highlighted, along with top farm-to-table restaurants like Elk Creek Café, Happy Valley Brewing and Otto's Pub & Brewery that take advantage of the area's thriving agricultural industry. Mifflin County, part of the Juniata River Valley, offers similar locally sourced drinking and dining, including family-friendly Reedsville Creamery, famous for smash burgers, fries, and hand-dipped ice cream, Revival Kitchen and Shy Bear Brewing. All three spots are popular with Happy Valley visitors and Penn State football travelers.



The Alleghenies offers a vibrant cultural scene. In Happy Valley, visitors enjoy a mix of local arts and music, plus festivals such as the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts, one of the top-ranked juried art fairs in the country. Penn State's performing arts venues also bring Broadway touring productions, big-name music acts and more to the area, including Bruce Springsteen, Elton John and many others. Across the region, organizations like Laurel Arts in Somerset County foster a local appreciation for art and music. In Cambria County, Johnstown's Cambria City neighborhood is enjoying a revitalization effort centered around the art, food and music of the various immigrant populations that settled and built the area.

The Alleghenies region is boosting its profile as a top-tier travel player and establishing itself among the nation's other renowned mountain destinations, like the Poconos, the Rockies, the Adirondacks and the Smokies. Happy Valley stands to benefit from efforts to grow visitors and offer exciting new experiences.

# Filling the gap between talent and industry



Photos: Pennsylvania College of Technology

According to McKinsey & Company, the skilled labor shortage that American industry has been facing for a while doesn't seem to be going anywhere, anytime soon, due to a variety of factors. There's the aging workforce and lack of young replacements. Meanwhile, changes in industry, such as the clean energy transition, spur on increasing demand.

More regionally, Alison Diehl, vice president for workforce development at Pennsylvania College of Technology (Penn College) said the current labor shortage is multifaceted, driven by several factors.

She told us, "First, there's a significant skills gap in many industries in which the demand for specialized technical skills far outpaces the supply of qualified workers. This gap has been exacerbated by rapid technological advancements, requiring workers to continually upskill or reskill. Additionally, demographic shifts, such as the retirement of baby boomers, lower birth rates and population decline in rural Pennsylvania, have left many positions unfilled. Finally, the perception of certain careers, especially in skilled trades, has led to a decline in interest among younger generations."

Career and technical schools like Pennsylvania College of Technology and Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology (CPI) are coming in to fill the gaps, doing their part to inspire the Gen Z workforce to meet increasing demand and replace an aging workforce. They do this in a few ways.

## A direct pathway to a rewarding, stable and sustainable career

For CPI, it's important to show young talent their options sooner rather than later. As such, the majority of the institute's students are also high school students. CPI instructs nearly 500 high school students and just over 100 post-high school students, across its 16 program areas — and for those high school students, the already affordable CPI tuition is covered by their high schools, making CPI an even more attractive option.

*"We can have 18 and 19-year-olds coming out of CPI and going to work for \$75,000–\$100,000 based on the skills they learned [here]."*

"We want students to come in early and learn a career or a trade, so that if they choose not to continue their post-secondary education, they're able to enter the workforce at a good, high-paying, life-sustaining wage," said CPI President MaryAnn Volders. "College isn't for everyone. Post-secondary institutions aren't for everyone... We can have 18 and 19-year-olds coming out of CPI and going to work for \$75,000–\$100,000 based on the skills they learned [here]."

(McKinsey noted that some trades have witnessed wage increases of more than 20% since 2020, due to labor shortages and increasing competition for talent.)

CPI is also remaining current with students' and industry's needs through initiatives like its joining of the Smart Automation Certification Alliance (SACA), which allows students to earn SACA Industry 4.0 certifications, prepping them to work in Industry 4.0 and IIoT sectors. CPI likewise partners with more than two dozen other educational institutions, so that students can transfer their credits elsewhere and pursue further education, if desired.

At Penn College, attracting students to its programs begins with showcasing the real-world impact and career opportunities that the college's offerings can provide.

Diehl explained, "We engage in outreach efforts that highlight success stories of our graduates, the strong employment rates and the high demand for skills in the industries we serve. Additionally, we partner with local high schools, community organizations and industry leaders to create a pipeline of interested students. We were recently awarded a \$4 million U.S. Department of Labor grant to improve the pipelines of high school students and unskilled workers into pre-apprenticeship and then apprenticeship. By offering hands-on learning experiences, state-of-the-art equipment and facilities and connections to industry employers, we make it clear that Penn College is a direct pathway to a rewarding, stable and sustainable career."

## Can the Alleghenies solve the skilled labor shortage?

While these schools might be excelling at equipping its students for the regional workforce, that doesn't mean that it's not up against some challenges.

Volders said, "I think a lot of parents are afraid that if they send their student to a career and tech school, they're not going to have an academic background, that they need to go to college. That's not true... We need more parents to send students here to learn a trade. Maybe they use it while they're in college, maybe they make it a career path, maybe it's just a skill they learn... But I really think it boils down to people being afraid to say, 'I'm a career and tech student'..."

*"By offering hands-on learning experiences, state-of-the-art equipment and facilities and connections to industry employers, we make it clear that Penn College is a direct pathway to a rewarding, stable and sustainable career."*

This is something that McKinsey touched on as well. A survey found that, despite increased enrollment in career and trade schools, 74% of students reported a perceived stigma associated with choosing vocational schools over traditional four-year universities, and nearly



Photos: Pennsylvania College of Technology

80% of students reported that their parents preferred they pursue a traditional college education, with only 5% of parents pushing their children to a vocational school.

“Vocational schools in the 80s and 90s had a different atmosphere. Now, we’re much more academic and much more student-centered, and much more technical in nature... We’ve upped our game a lot in the last 20 to 25 years, in career and technical education. However, I do think a lot of parents remember the old vo tech,” added Volders. “We’re still fighting that stigma.”

There’s also the fact that many members of the Gen Z workforce highly value flexibility, but it’s difficult to provide a large degree of flexibility in a workplace that requires one to be physically present in a dedicated workspace, such as in a dentist’s office or mechanic’s garage.

*“We’ve upped our game a lot in the last 20 to 25 years, in career and technical education.”*

That, though, is not an insurmountable challenge. Volders posed, “Can we give people [in skilled trades] more flexibility in their time? Can we give them more personal days? Can we give them more vacation days? Can we help

them put family first and not necessarily put the job first when not necessary? Those are the things we have to look at.”

Diehl likewise challenged employers to take a more proactive approach in attracting young industry talent, particularly with a look at talent development.

“This includes partnering with educational institutions like Penn College to create customized training programs that align with their specific needs. Offering internships, apprenticeships and co-op opportunities not only helps train the next generation of workers, but also allows employers to identify and recruit top talent early on,” she said. “Additionally, employers should focus on creating an attractive work environment that offers career growth, competitive wages and a strong company culture. They should also consider offering continuous learning opportunities for their current workforce to retain and develop their talent pool.”

## SCASD Education Foundation makes a direct and immediate impact, keeping donations local to benefit State College students

In the nearly ten years since the State College Education Foundation was founded, countless students in all grades and at every school across the district have benefited from the generosity of thousands of donors whose contributions have been put to work for a variety of important programs.

The Education Foundation’s flagship fund, the Mardi Lowry McDonough ’87 Student Opportunity Fund and Grant Program, for example, has fueled innovative, educator-led initiatives by providing grants twice annually in the fall and spring. Grants have funded everything from musical instruments to lab equipment, from field trips to pollinator gardens.

The Mental Health Matters Fund, established by the Education Foundation in partnership with the district, provides professional development for faculty and staff, mental health curriculum, an awareness program and even direct mental health services for students who aren’t fully covered by insurance.

Gifts to the Richard M. Bunnell ’49 Memorial Fund are designated for enhancing extracurricular opportunities, and other special funds support opportunities in athletics, journalism, and music.

Combined, these funds have enabled enhanced experiences inside and outside of classrooms and created new opportunities for students to thrive.

In giving to the Education Foundation, donors seize the opportunity to invest their charitable dollars locally and make a direct and immediate difference for current students. Contributions make a difference in priority areas that need additional funding now. District alumni, even those living outside the area, have rekindled meaningful connections with their alma mater by contributing to Education Foundation funds and major projects like Memorial Field renovations.

With students at the center of its mission, the Education Foundation has also created opportunities for friend-raising through its signature event, the annual Maroon & Gray Society Celebration, which began in 2018. Honoring distinguished alumni, dedicated retired faculty, exceptional teams, and other noteworthy individuals, the event brings together families, friends, alumni, educators, and other members of the SCASD community for an evening of fun and friendship and to raise funds for important projects. The event contributed significant funds for new marching band uniforms, extracurricular activities, and seed funding for the Mental Health Matters Fund, and more.

As it approaches its next decade, the Education Foundation is seeking partnerships with individuals, alumni, families, and businesses to continue making an impact on students. Learn more at [SCASDFoundation.org/ways-to-give](https://scasdfoundation.org/ways-to-give).

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# Build it

and they will come.

Photos: Chuck Fong

## When big city downtowns are in trouble, how is State College thriving?

*“Workers no longer need to be downtown because companies no longer need to be downtown. And with that in mind, we have to be honest with ourselves and ask, ‘Why should anyone want to come to downtown?’”*

This jarring statement was not made about State College, but rather downtown Pittsburgh, in *Pittsburgh Quarterly’s* “Remaking Downtown Pittsburgh,” which invited local leaders to tackle the city’s challenge of growth and occupancy after COVID. Bill Demchak, chair and CEO of PNC Financial Services Group, held no punches in his analysis: “Downtown isn’t coming back. At least not the downtown we used to know.”

The city is far from alone — a quick search shows similar stories about Chicago, Philadelphia and New York. It begs the question: Why is downtown State College not in the same boat?

The answer is tied to downtown State College’s makeup as a college town, as well as its commitment to innovation.

“The idea was that cities would always need office space, and now

are challenged with what to do with the space, and how to invoke a sense of community into those spaces?” Jonathan Friedman said.

Friedman has a heritage of investing in State College’s downtown district. His grandfather Sid Friedman was integral to revitalizing downtown State College, purchasing buildings like the landmark Corner Room and Hotel State College, and creating what is now known as Calder Way. His father, Ron Friedman, was involved with the family real estate business and also served as an attorney. (“If you had a house closing between 1984 and 2009, he was probably at your closing,” Jonathan said.)

Jonathan’s aunt and uncle, Edward and Charlene Friedman, managed State College Downtown Properties, a portfolio of commercial, residential and hospitality holdings in downtown State College. A practicing attorney, Jonathan lived in the Chicago area until 2012, when he came back to Happy Valley and joined the business as director of development, leading in the creation of one of the first high-rises in downtown State College, The Maxxen, located on Heister Street. After his uncle’s death in 2020, he became the CEO of the family’s portfolios at Comet Properties.

His experience as a litigator in The Loop in Chicago before returning to the town where he grew up has given him a unique insight into both the challenges and opportunities of downtown development. He says that success is tied to being stewards of historic spaces as well as embracing innovation and progress. Here's what he says sets State College apart.

**It's an influx of new people**

He says that State College is "very lucky" because of its proximity to Penn State.

"We always have a new group of 10,000 students each year, who bring their parents and families. That's 40,000 people discovering new things and reliving some of the things that they've discovered. We have alumni coming in for football games. It's a melting pot of the past, present and future. That is what keeps these places engaged and growing," he described.

This number is rapidly growing, too. In 2023, Penn State reported 16,239 first-year undergraduate students, an increase for the fifth consecutive year. Additionally, The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau recently released a study showing that Centre County reached a record 5 million person trips last year, a 3.1% increase over 2022. This total includes 3.2 million day trips, 1.8 million overnight trips and an estimated visitation spend of over \$1 billion.

**It's about student housing**

Friedman referred to a zoning amendment in 2013 that allowed the construction of high-rises along the edges of College Avenue and Beaver Avenue to provide more student housing along with commercial space.

"What we've seen in regards to Class A real estate, the big buildings that we are seeing going up... the value is created in the beds above the commercial space. Commercial space has now become a viable place to invest, and hopefully, within the next 12-18 months, we'll



see those spaces filled with new and interesting tenants," he explained.

Ed LeClear, planning director at the State College Borough, agreed. He said that, with zoning in the 1980s and 1990s, growth in student housing was pushed into neighborhoods and townships, but new zoning in 2005, 2007 and 2013 created a zoning environment that allowed for larger buildings downtown with a much larger residential footprint.

"This coincided with a huge increase in purpose-built student housing nationally," he said in an interview in 2023.

**It's an ongoing commitment toward local business**

Friedman said that another thing that sets downtown State College apart is its shopping experience.

"In places like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, there needs to be big storefronts like Saks and Louis Vuitton. Here, we see success with retailers who are more local and don't just sell you a

product but sell you the purpose and intent: places like Harpers, Appalachian Outfitters, and Rapid Transit," he said.

He added that, while nostalgia is an economic driver, there is also immense opportunity to innovate and create new memories in downtown State College.

"Antifragile Brewing is a perfect example of something that has been very successful in one of our buildings. They drive people in there because they are trying something different. Those are the kinds of ideas that we should rally around," he said.

**It's an eye on the future**

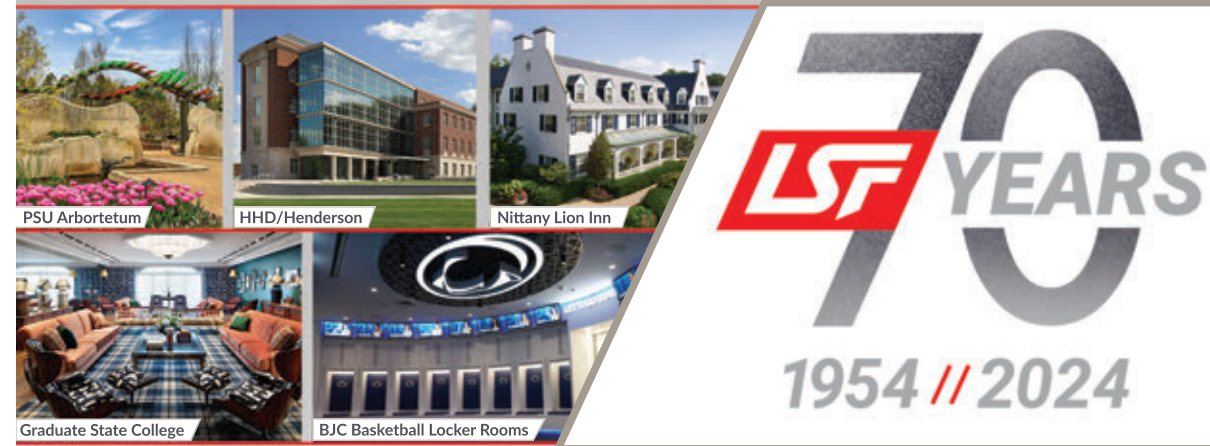
"I think the future of State College will be thoughtfully developing the town economically and developing smaller pieces to make truly interesting spaces where we at a human level

can experience it and have it still be State College, but a better version," Friedman said.

Most of the downtown is not new, he emphasized, with some of the "newer" buildings built nearly 50 years ago, so it is important to recognize the difference between nostalgia and sentimentality when looking to the health and development of downtown State College.

"We all have great memories in downtown State College, but you need to ask yourself, was it the restaurant itself or the good memory from that restaurant? We create memories that aren't so much built on the place itself, but the experiences we have while we are here. I think we have the capacity to do that for everyone in every generation of visitors and students, but we have to accept that play. We have to accept that some of these places are going to go away and we're going to try to fill [the spaces with] new memories," he said.

**HONORING THE PAST  
BUILDING THE FUTURE**



**THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP BUILD THIS COMMUNITY.**

# PENN STATE'S BIG INVESTMENT IN NEW SPORTS FACILITIES IS AN INVESTMENT IN THE HAPPY VALLEY ECONOMY

According to the Happy Valley Sports and Entertainment Alliance, “In the aggregate, sports events and associated activity generate an annual economic impact of \$417 million within Centre County, supporting 4,315 jobs with \$133 million in employee compensation. Impacts of this economic activity within Pennsylvania are \$467 million.”

## The Alliance also noted that, as of a 2024 study:

- Penn State football home games are the biggest drivers of sports economic impact, generating \$87 million in visitor spending and accounting for about 890,000 out of Centre County's annual 1.7 million attendees.
- Other Penn State athletic events draw 666,500 attendees, while countywide events at venues such as Nittany Valley Sports Centre, C3 Sports, Centre Region Parks and Recreation facilities attract 150,000 people annually.
- Sporting event visitor spending totaled \$102 million — \$17 million of which came from non-campus events — and generated a total of \$149 million in total economic impact for the county.

With such a major economic impact, it's no surprise that myriad sports facilities around University Park are receiving a facelift — or new life completely — this year and in the coming years.

According to Penn State Athletic Director Pat Kraft, “Penn State's investment in these athletics facilities will continue to have a positive impact on the Centre Region community. The ability for our facilities to host events beyond our intercollegiate athletics events will have an economic impact for our local community far

beyond the seven football home weekends per year. The investments we are making in our facilities will enhance the fan experience with improved concessions, restrooms and circulation.”

## SO WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT AT EACH?



### BEAVER STADIUM

The project most in the limelight, of course, has been Beaver Stadium.

“As you look specifically at the Beaver Stadium revitalization project, 75% of material procurement and labor has been from Pennsylvania to date. The project will continue until 2027 and the labor force alone will have a \$15 million economic impact. There will be 400–450 workers will be on site daily at the peak of the project and there will be 800–1,000 unique tradespeople working in the summer of 2025 and 2026,” said Kraft.

The project is expected to be fully complete prior to the start of the 2027 football season. For all the up-to-date information, look to [gopsusports.com/beaverstadiumrenovation](https://gopsusports.com/beaverstadiumrenovation).

Photos provided by Penn State Athletics



### JEFFREY FIELD SOCCER COMPLEX

Construction for this \$21.25 million project also began Fall 2024, with completion anticipated in Fall 2025. According to Penn State Athletics, “The project aims to modernize soccer experience for all involved, including athletes, coaches and fans. The fan experience will not change this fall season. But Fall 2025, fans can expect concessions, indoor bathrooms, entry plazas and more. Improves fan experience and allows for the ability to host events at the facility.”

### GREENBURG INDOOR SPORTS CENTER

A \$31.9 million project, the Greenburg Indoor Sports Center will, when completed in summer of 2025, newly offer a food services athletic training table, as well as a wellness and athletic training center for 800-plus student-athletes.



### THE INDOOR PRACTICE BUBBLE

According to Penn State, this \$9.8 million project will offer extra practice facilities for varsity athletic. Construction began in August, with the anticipated completion of the turf pitch in May 2025. The bubble (air supported structure) will be installed over the pitch in late Fall 2025, to be

used in the winter and early spring each year. The field is expected to be used year-round, but only covered by bubble in the late fall to early spring.

## Recently Completed Projects

### PENN STATE FIELD HOCKEY COMPLEX

The construction team put the final touches on the upgraded facility ahead of the home opener this fall. The \$12.8 million project included upgrades, improvements and additions encompassing dressing areas, a locker room space of officials, ticket office, public restrooms, concession areas, press and media boxes and a television broadcast booth.

### BRYCE JORDAN CENTER

This summer, work has been done to renovate the 1855 Club event space, previously known as the Founder's Room, as well as the beginning of phased suite renovations. Fans will also see a second check-out free concession location, featuring Amazon's Just Walk Out technology, similar to the BJC's Pick & Roll concession stand.

### 19TH HOLE CAFÉ AT WALKER CLUBHOUSE

Completed last year, the 19th Hole Café enhanced the customer experience and expanded available services at the Walker Clubhouse. So far it has been well received, with Trivia Nights being a highlight among patrons.

### MEDLAR FIELD AT LUBRANO PARK

Initially spearheaded in part by the State College Spikes in an effort to meet new MLB standards, upgrades at the baseball field were multifaceted, with the most noticeable to fans being the new high-definition video board that is approximately 5x larger than its predecessor, new LED on-field lights and a fully replaced (and slightly reconfigured) outfield wall.



# REVITALIZING RETAIL IN THE HEART OF HAPPY VALLEY: A Q&A WITH KENDRA KIELBASA

*As the Retail and Commercial Business Advocate for the Downtown Improvement District, Kendra Kielbasa is building relationships with key stakeholders to help revitalize the retail scene in Downtown State College, aimed predominantly at filling empty retail space in the newer student housing high-rises. Along the way, she's dispelling common misconceptions and creating new opportunities for local small businesses.*



Photos: Chuck Fong



## **Q: Can you share a little about your efforts and how things are progressing?**

First and foremost, I'm focused on relationships. Building connections is foundational for our next steps to be successful. I've been meeting with downtown constituents and stakeholders, including businesses, organizations, property owners and borough officials.

I'm also deliberately reaching out beyond downtown to create channels for sharing information and establishing partnerships that can be mutually beneficial. This outreach includes commercial real estate brokers and agents, government officials and public entities like Centre Region

Council of Governments, and economic development groups such as the CBICC, Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, the Penn State Small Business Development Center, Ben Franklin Technology Partners and the Happy Valley LaunchBox. All of these stakeholders are invested in the success of downtown State College and have a wealth of knowledge and resources to contribute to our efforts.

## **Q: What are you learning in these discussions?**

We've made some key discoveries that are helping to reveal important facts and debunk myths and common misconceptions. For example, there's been a widespread belief that landlords for vacant retail space in student housing high-rises were unwilling to work with prospective tenants on affordable rent and readying space. From our research, we know that landlords are interested and willing to provide Tenant Improvements (TI), a negotiated sum that a landlord will provide to a

tenant to cover all or a portion of construction costs for build-outs to customize grey shell spaces.

From the landlord perspective, they consider multiple factors when applying TI, including the length of the lease, square footage and tenant financials, with financials being the most critical. The stronger the balance sheet, the greater the TI. And, as you'd expect, the landlord views both larger square footage and a longer lease term more favorably.

We also know that landlords are not idly allowing spaces to sit empty; they are actively engaged with prospective tenants. Landlords are looking for businesses that: 1) have a proven track record of success in other markets, 2) have strong financials and 3) will be able to thrive and survive for 7-10 years in the space.

Another issue that's come to light is vacant second-floor office space. Plenty of space is available, particularly for larger offices with 20-50 employees.

Notably, there are not enough parking spaces under these buildings to provide each office employee with a space. Our commercial real estate agents and brokers are finding their clients are interested in these prime office locations, but ultimately pivot to other locations with parking that will accommodate their workforce.

## **Q: Can you share some details about how you are supporting existing and prospective businesses and organizations?**

I serve as the point of contact for hosting and facilitating meetings between existing and prospective businesses, property owners, brokers, the Downtown State College Improvement District (DSCID), and other regional entities. In this role, my goals are to remove barriers, provide resources and support, and provide and receive referrals and information that benefit our existing downtown businesses and prospective businesses.

I'm pleased that these efforts have been fruitful and have resulted in a business expansion, connecting existing businesses to consultants and funding opportunities, and connecting businesses and emerging opportunities to spaces and landlords.

On a related note, much of the networking I've been doing beyond downtown is to support downtown businesses. I am in regular contact with our commercial real estate agents and brokers, which gives me a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities and pending activity. Likewise, I collaborate with entrepreneurial and economic development organizations, so I am aware of the landscape of local startups and emerging businesses, and the broader economic goals for the region.

Another successful tactic I'm implementing is a business focus group that brings together business owners to brainstorm and find opportunities for collaboration. We'll continue these sessions to help identify gaps and consider ways to address them.

All of these endeavors roll up to activating vacant spaces, through leased spaces of course, but also with pop-up shops. Pop-up shops are a cost-effective way for small businesses to build brand awareness, test the market or even new products, and engage with established and new clients. They also add to the vibrancy of our downtown, attracting foot traffic and fostering discovery and excitement amongst our shoppers and visitors. Pop-ups have been doing extremely

well. They've been happening throughout the summer and will continue throughout the fall and beyond. I'm maintaining a list of interested vendors and it's growing rapidly.

Visitors to downtown will also notice exterior activation projects, like window displays and beautification efforts.

**Q: What else can visitors and residents look for this fall?**

I can't share details, but get ready for a surprise twist — a pop-up experience may spring up at an exciting new location. We're also looking forward to some new business openings and expansions. We're excited to welcome new businesses like Tropical Smoothie, Riko's Pizza, Figo, Wreck-It and more to our community. We're especially thrilled to celebrate expansions at The Makery and Chew Chew Bun, as well as the dynamic collaborations between The Nittany Lion Inn and Harpers State College, The Scholar Hotel and Big Spring Spirits, and Holla Spirits and McLanahan's.

For business owners, we plan to kick off an expert-led three-part seminar on exit strategy because we know this is an area of interest for many of our long-time small business retailers. It will cover how businesses are valued and marketed, what a buyer needs to know, and how to prepare.



We are in the early planning stages of bringing art to some of our vacant spaces, too.

**Q: Is there anything else you are excited about and want to share?**

I'm amazed by the people, businesses and organizations in downtown State College. There is an energy and vibe that is so engaging and welcoming. We have a rich history to build on with exciting opportunities ahead.

Come downtown! Visit our merchants, dine in our unique restaurants, explore our art walk, see a show, listen to live local music. There is so much to do. Downtown State College is the heart of Happy Valley. It's truly a special place.

Follow the Downton State College Improvement District on Instagram, Facebook, or check the website to stay up-to-date on fall events.

*Businesses can follow Kendra Kielbasa on LinkedIn for business information.*



Photos: Penn Highlands Healthcare

## The healthcare boom continues in Happy Valley

It's no secret that Happy Valley is experiencing a massive increase in new healthcare facilities. Mount Nittany Health has multiple projects underway, as does Geisinger. The latest project to open its doors to the public is the new Penn Highlands State College, lauded as "the hospital of tomorrow."

"State College was chosen as the site for Penn Highlands Healthcare's new hospital because it enables the health system to expand our footprint east while serving the people in the Centre County region," said Rhonda Halstead, MSM, Regional Market President, Central Region, Penn Highlands Healthcare. "The convenient State College location gives people in the Centre County region increased access to Penn Highlands Healthcare's expert physicians and providers and innovative healthcare services in their region."

The \$70 million hospital and medical office building is indeed located conveniently, right off some of the area's main thoroughfares and near major shopping centers, but the new hospital's benefits exceed its location. According

to Halstead, the hospital and medical office building provide patients with "practically everything they need under one roof."



There's an emergency department with private treatment rooms and a trauma room, medical imaging, a lab, drive-thru pharmacy, walk-in clinic and the Hahne Cancer Centre and Breast Care Services.

But what exactly does being "the hospital of tomorrow" mean? Beyond convenient location and a wide breadth of services, Penn Highlands

State College harnesses the power of state-of-the-art technology to make the healthcare experience more comfortable and, again, convenient.

That experience begins before patients even arrive at the hospital, with Penn Highlands Healthcare MyCheckIn used to complete intake forms from a computer, tablet or smartphone. Then, patients can check in for an appointment, using their smartphone upon arrival. MyCheckIn is currently being used for family medicine, pulmonary and orthopedics and sports medicine appointments.

The facility also utilizes a biometric patient identification system that scans the unique veins in each person's hand.

Halstead explained, "The system generates a key associated with those scanned veins which have more than 1,000 characteristics unique to each



person. That key is then stored and compared upon each patient's visit during the registration process. When a patient places their palm just a few inches above the reader, the digital key then confirms their unique identity and informs the registration clerk that they have the correct patient's electronic chart."

Penn Highlands State College was "built from scratch" — unlike Penn Highlands' other hospitals, which were acquired. This has allowed Penn Highlands Healthcare to construct every element of the facility around the express desire to meet community needs.

"Penn Highlands Healthcare had a vision for this hospital and medical office building for many years. We identified the health and wellness needs of this region, and with Penn Highlands State College we are providing these services for the Centre County region such as Emergency Care, Lung Care, Medical Imaging, Women's healthcare and more," said Halstead. "We constructed this hospital around the region's specific needs. From the minute they walk through the door, patients and visitors will notice that the hospital and medical office building were designed for their comfort and privacy."

The Penn Highlands State College project is part of a broader, \$180 million Penn Highlands Healthcare Master Facilities Plan, which also included new facilities and/or renovations in DuBois, Clearfield and Brookville, among others.

## The Hospital of Tomorrow is Here!

Introducing Penn Highlands State College.

Penn Highlands State College is a new hospital and medical office building that brings care and expertise supported by a complete health system right here to Centre County.

- 24/7 emergency care
- Innovative healthcare technologies
- Patient-centric amenities, including biometric patient ID and online registration
- Primary care, including walk-in care, and specialty care, including breast care services, heart care, lung care and advanced cancer services

**Penn Highlands State College**  
239 Colonnade Boulevard | State College  
[phhealthcare.org/statecollege](http://phhealthcare.org/statecollege)

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**Coming Soon** Personal Care Memory Care & Privatized Nursing Care Rooms

**Call today for information on how we can partner with you!**

# Run with Heart Foundation

shaped by powerful personal stories  
and a deep commitment to saving lives



The Run with Heart Foundation was born from powerful stories of survival, compassion, and community. Its roots are in a series of life-changing events that show the impact of a selfless human spirit.

But it begins with this bleak statistic: only one in ten victims of sudden cardiac arrest that happens outside of a hospital setting will survive. With early CPR and defibrillation, this number can rise to 50%. The foundation's mission is simple, yet incredibly powerful: to break down financial and educational barriers to life-saving training by spreading CPR and AED knowledge and awareness. The goal is to ensure that everyday people have the confidence to step in during emergencies, making communities safer, one person at a time.

Run with Heart was founded through a unique collaboration among cardiac arrest survivors and the nurses who saved their lives. In 2022, Vicki Williams was shopping with her one-year-old daughter in Target when she went into cardiac arrest and collapsed. Two nurses shopping nearby came to her aid to perform CPR, saving her life. Greg Woodman was running the Presque Isle Half Marathon in 2023 in Erie when he suffered cardiac arrest and died. Six nurses and four other runners left the marathon course to perform CPR until paramedics arrived with an AED machine. Greg was revived on the way to the hospital.

Several of these nurses, along with Greg and Vicki and others with a passion for the cause, came together to establish the Run with Heart Foundation, aimed at educating and training bystanders to perform life-saving CPR. Just three months after Greg's heart attack, the foundation hosted its first event, a 5K that raised \$20,000 and funded American Heart Association-certified CPR training for more than 200 individuals. Greg even completed the event!

The second annual Run with Heart Foundation 5K is coming up on October 26.

Greg explained, "The group of nurses and others who got involved to start the foundation are truly givers who lead with their own hearts. They became personally invested champions for CPR awareness and have made a significant and swift impact in such a short time. I am excited to see the foundation achieve its potential."

Fueled by the commitment of healthcare professionals and the determination of survivors like Greg and Vicki, Run with Heart continues to grow. They work toward creating safer communities by breaking down the barriers to CPR education, spreading awareness that early intervention by bystanders can make the difference between life and death for victims of cardiac arrest.

In addition to offering free CPR classes, the foundation advocates for state-level changes in education, including a mandate for CPR training as part of high school health curricula. Their efforts aim to ensure that more people are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to act when someone's life is on the line.

As the foundation moves forward, it remains dedicated to spreading awareness, providing education, and fostering communities where anyone can step up and save a life — just like they did for Vicki and Greg.

To learn more visit  
[www.RunWithHeartFoundation.org](http://www.RunWithHeartFoundation.org)  
or call Greg Woodman at  
(814) 883-4567



SECOND ANNUAL  
**RUN WITH HEART  
FOUNDATION 5K**  
OCTOBER 26TH

# The Happy Valley entrepreneurial ecosystem: Your guide to who to call for your unique business needs

It's no secret that Happy Valley is overflowing with entrepreneurial resources. If you're just starting out — or maybe a long-time business owner who needs a little help — how do you know which resources are best for you?

Here's a quick guide to the area's most influential and impactful business resources, including who does what, the services they offer, at what stage they get involved, and how you can benefit when they do.



**Invent Penn State** is a Commonwealth-wide initiative to spur economic development, job creation and student career success. Invent Penn State blends entrepreneurship-focused academic programs, business startup training and incubation, funding for commercialization, and university/community/industry collaborations to facilitate the challenging process of turning research discoveries into valuable products and services that can benefit Pennsylvanians and humankind.

## Services offered

Invent Penn State programs support early-stage entrepreneurs to help de-risk and accelerate a startup idea. Whether that's Penn State students, student-athletes, faculty, staff, researchers, or Pennsylvania community members with no affiliation to Penn State; Invent Penn State has a program or event to support any entrepreneurs' needs.

You can learn more about these programs, events and resources at [invent.psu.edu](http://invent.psu.edu).

## At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?

Entrepreneurs at any stage, with or without a business, can reach out and participate in Invent Penn State programs. Even if you have an idea and aren't sure if it's viable, Invent Penn State's programs, events and resources can help you build a pathway to success.

## What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?

Access to a large ecosystem of entrepreneurial support. The organization likes to say Invent Penn State owns, influences, and amplifies all things entrepreneurship and innovation-related at Penn State and within Penn State's campus communities.

Learn more at [www.invent.psu.edu](http://www.invent.psu.edu).



**Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern PA (Ben Franklin CNP)** is an organization dedicated to fostering innovation and economic growth in Pennsylvania by providing funding, business and technical expertise, and resources to startups and established companies. BFTP helps companies develop innovative products, improve their processes and bring new technologies to market, thereby creating high-paying jobs and stimulating the regional economy.

## Services offered

Ben Franklin offers a comprehensive range of services to support area entrepreneurs, including: essential funding opportunities for startups and established companies, expert business mentoring, and technical expertise to enhance products and processes. Networking opportunities connect entrepreneurs with valuable industry professionals and resources.

Additionally, Ben Franklin hosts annual Big Idea Contests where entrepreneurs can showcase their innovative ideas and compete for funding.

The organization's TechCelerator Startup Bootcamps provide intensive programs designed to accelerate early-stage companies through mentorship and training. Ben Franklin also offers free educational webinars through the Ben Franklin Learning Center, featuring industry experts who provide valuable insights and knowledge.

## At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?

Entrepreneurs can connect at any stage of their journey. Whether they are just beginning with an idea, in the early stages of developing their business, or already operating and seeking to grow, Ben Franklin's resources and support are designed to help them succeed. Additionally, Ben Franklin supports established manufacturing companies looking to innovate, expand, and enhance their operations.

## What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?

Entrepreneurs can expect to gain critical funding, expert advice, and valuable connections that can propel their businesses forward. They will have access to tailored support that addresses their specific needs, helping them overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. Additionally, they will become part of a community that fosters collaboration, innovation, and shared success. Learn more at [www.cnp.benfranklin.org](http://www.cnp.benfranklin.org).



**CREN: The Centre Region Entrepreneurial Network (CREN)** is a vibrant support ecosystem for entrepreneurs, fostering meaningful connections, inspiring discussions, and a social environment that prioritizes mutual support. CREN unites a diverse group of entrepreneurs and enthusiasts from various industries, facilitating learning, and collaboration to improve businesses and make a positive community impact. Led by Todd Erdley, CREN emphasizes genuine connections and shared growth over sales networking, creating a nurturing environment for entrepreneurial success.



**WiNGs** is an organization dedicated to creating a supportive network for women entrepreneurs and small business owners. The primary goal is to enhance the professional, personal, and marketing abilities of its members through workshops, collaborations, and resources. WiNGs is open to all women business owners regardless of industry and also offers a mentorship program for those aspiring to start their own businesses. The group fosters a sense of community, encourages personal growth, and facilitates business success through regular meetings, events, and networking opportunities.

Learn more at [www.wngs.org](http://www.wngs.org).



**Happy Valley LaunchBox** powered by PNC Bank is an entrepreneurial connecting point that provides all businesses, regardless of industry or stage, a place to network, learn, and find resources. Accelerator programs focus on startups and early-stage ideas with the tools, resources and support they need to launch and succeed. Happy Valley LaunchBox offers a range of services, including coworking spaces, expert mentoring, no-cost legal services, prototyping and fabrication facilities through OriginLabs, entrepreneurship education, and access to specialized programs designed to accelerate business growth. The organization's mission is to de-risk the startup journey and empower entrepreneurs along their path to success.

**Services offered**

The primary services offered include accelerator programs, no-cost coworking space, 1-on-1 mentoring, entrepreneurship education, no-cost legal services, and rapid prototyping and fabrication space.

**At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?**

Entrepreneurs can connect at any stage of their journey. Whether they are in the ideation phase, developing a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) or looking to scale their business by adding a new service or product line, Happy Valley LaunchBox offers support to help entrepreneurs de-risk ideas and test the market before launching.

**What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?**

Entrepreneurs working with Happy Valley LaunchBox can expect to gain strategic guidance, resource access, accelerated growth, community, and networking opportunities.

[www.happyvalley.launchbox.psu.edu](http://www.happyvalley.launchbox.psu.edu)



**The Chamber of Business & Industry Centre County (CBICC)** is unique in the fact that it is a traditional Chamber of Commerce, as well as the economic development organization for Centre County. For the chamber side, it provides business promotions, informational workshops, and networking events and, on the economic development side, there's a revolving loan fund that can provide loans to startups and small businesses. The CBICC can also help businesses navigate through any type of permitting processes with the local jurisdictions. It is the front door or guide for businesses navigating Centre County.

**Services offered**

The primary service is connecting businesses with the right resources so that they can grow. Services also include networking opportunities for businesses, and promoting new or hiring businesses. The CBICC also helps with hiring, technical and business assistance, including workforce funding, navigating municipal or county governments, making business connections and site selection.

Learn more at [www.cbicc.org](http://www.cbicc.org).



**1855 Capital** is a seed and early-stage venture capital fund investing in companies with an affinity to Penn State University. 1855 Capital develops investment opportunities by actively engaging with current faculty/staff and students involved in world-class research efforts and the 600,000+ alumni network.

Learn more at [www.1855capital.com](http://www.1855capital.com).



**Bellefonte SpringBoard** is a hub for business innovation and collaboration, dedicated to assisting local entrepreneurs and individuals eager to transform their passions and ideas into reality. SpringBoard's mission is to connect individuals with the appropriate resources, regardless of their current stage in the entrepreneurial journey.

**Services offered**

Bellefonte SpringBoard offers coworking memberships and day passes for remote workers and entrepreneurs, and a space to host meetings, workshops and trainings. The organization also works to connect entrepreneurs to the right resources and people to support them on their business journey, whether they are opening a brick-and-mortar or online business. It ranges from helping connect them to consultants who can help them write business or marketing plans, to getting them face-to-face with attorneys, insurance agents, etc., or guiding them through application and permit processes.

**At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?**

At any stage! The types of support entrepreneurs need varies depending on the type of business they are pursuing, and Bellefonte SpringBoard is able to support them and connect them to the right resources and people at any stage, from someone with an inkling of a business idea to someone ready to open a brick-and-mortar in downtown Bellefonte.

**What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?**

When you collaborate with Bellefonte SpringBoard, you receive essential mentorship, customized guidance and access to a robust network of professionals, along with resources and support designed to expand with you as you grow.

Learn more at [www.bellefontespringboard.com](http://www.bellefontespringboard.com).



**The Innovative Manufacturers' Center (IMC)** is in charge of helping advance the manufacturing community, working only with manufacturers to help them improve productivity, efficiencies and quality. They helped manufacturers make technological investments and people investments, and help companies improve their operations.

**Services offered**

They often work with manufacturing executives to help with what their clients are most interested in: growth. They offer reasonable rates and have a vested interest in Central Pennsylvania's manufacturing success. With their effective process management, they can help transform your manufacturing process.

**At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?**

All stages. If people are looking for more resources, IMC helps individuals to connect to the ones that will supplement their growth. IMC's goal is to offer assistance in three core areas: innovation, business growth, and continuous improvement.

**What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?**

Growth. IMC focuses on how to make its clients more profitable and produce more efficiently. Over 630 local manufacturers have worked with IMC on over 3,000 projects.

Learn more at [www.imcpa.com](http://www.imcpa.com).



**The CTIDA** fosters economic growth and development in Centre County by providing financial support opportunities to businesses who seek to overcome obstacles that will lead to increased and sustainable job retention and creation.

**Services offered**

The primary service at the CTIDA is providing financial support through loans, lines of credit, and guarantees, as well as assisting with acquisition of grant funding. These financial resources can help entrepreneurs with startup costs, expansion and other capital needs.

**At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?**

Entrepreneurs can certainly connect at any stage, though financial support programs are most beneficial to established businesses or those startups able to provide solid business documents such as a business plan and financial projections. In addition, CTIDA hopes to create an ecosystem for entrepreneurs that helps small businesses start here, grow here and stay here in Centre County, and to do so the organization strives to establish connections from inception through exit.

**What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?**

While funding is the primary service, entrepreneurs gain the benefits of having a support system that includes years of collective business experience among the CTIDA board members and the collaborative network of economic development allies working with the CTIDA to create a vibrant, navigable, and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Learn more at [www.collegetownship.org](http://www.collegetownship.org).



**SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG)** is a community and economic development agency in Lewisburg and is one of seven Local Development Districts in Pennsylvania. SEDA-COG enhances the quality of life and economic advantage for residents and businesses in the 11 Central Pennsylvania counties through its vital partnerships and initiatives.

**Services offered**

Four business services programs offer a wide range of resources that entrepreneurs in Centre County can utilize to accelerate their business growth. The SEDA-COG economic development program reinvigorates communities with grant partnerships and connects businesses with regional partners. Then, for export assistance, SEDA-COG staff can assist businesses with every aspect of exporting, including international market research, product compliance, export licensing, documentation, shipping, and more. Thirdly, entrepreneurs and businesses in Centre County can start or expand with low-interest loans from the SEDA-COG business finance department. Lastly, APEX Accelerator is a national program with 97 centers located throughout the United States that is funded by the Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP). SEDA-COG serves as the service provider in 18 counties, including Centre County. The program assists small and large businesses in obtaining federal, state, and local government contracts.

**At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?**

Entrepreneurs can connect at any stage in their journey to help propel their business forward by finding and connecting with the right resources at the right time.

Learn more at [www.seda-cog.org](http://www.seda-cog.org).



**The MVEDP** is a private, non-profit economic development and chamber of commerce organization formed in 1988 in response to the collapse of the coal-driven economy.

**Services offered**

The MVEDP meets with entrepreneurs to find out what type of business they were hoping to establish, providing them with an entrepreneur resource kit and pointing them in the right direction to receive additional assistance.

The MVEDP has the tools to assist entrepreneurs with land and building space. Since 1990, there have been 26 people from the Happy Valley region who have established their businesses in the Philipsburg/Moshannon Valley area. They considered the location because it had the ready-to-go sites, building space and available workforce. Low-cost building space has been especially a key reason why folks in Happy Valley have established businesses there, in the Moshannon Valley Enterprise Center and Moshannon Valley Regional Business Center. The MVEC has been to home to over 75 businesses since 1988.

**What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?**

The MVEDP assists entrepreneurs and existing business owners and is committed to the improvement of the economy and overall quality of life in the area. The staff is dedicated to economic development work and the entrepreneur will receive undivided attention and will be pointed in the right direction. Entrepreneurs can meet with the MVEDP staff at any stage in their business development, but it is usually best if they meet with them during the early phase.

Learn more at [www.mvedp.org](http://www.mvedp.org).



**The Penn State Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** offers free business consulting for Centre, Mifflin, Lycoming, and Clinton Counties. Whether you already own a business or are planning to start one, its seminars and free, confidential one-on-one consultations can help entrepreneurs achieve their goals.

**Services offered**

The Penn State SBDC provides free, confidential consulting services to individuals looking to start or grow a small business. In addition, the SBDC offers a full roster of specialized educational programs covering many business topics.

**At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?**

Any stage! From helping aspiring entrepreneurs turn ideas into businesses, to helping small firms grow, to providing the information that every businessperson needs to make critical decisions, the SBDC is the resource that entrepreneurs in all industry sectors at any stage can turn to for help — help that can make the difference between success and failure.

**What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?**

Education, information and tools necessary to build successful businesses.

Learn more at [www.sbd.cpsu.edu](http://www.sbd.cpsu.edu).

**The Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program (PennTAP)** is a trusted resource dedicated to helping small- and medium-sized businesses across Pennsylvania improve operational efficiency and sustainability. By providing expert guidance in areas like energy efficiency, pollution prevention, and technology commercialization, PennTAP empowers businesses to innovate, reduce costs, and stay competitive. Leveraging its strong connections with Penn State University and industry leaders, PennTAP ensures that businesses have access to cutting-edge research, expertise, and strategic partnerships. Through its efforts, PennTAP not only supports economic growth but also fosters a healthier, more sustainable community across the state.

**Services offered**

PennTAP empowers Pennsylvania businesses by offering energy and operational assessments to boost efficiency and reduce costs. They guide companies through the process of securing grants and rebates to support growth, and connect them with Penn State's extensive resources, including research, expertise, and industry connections with both private and government entities within Pennsylvania. These services help companies innovate, implement sustainable practices, and stay competitive while minimizing environmental impact and maximizing profitability.

**At what stage in the startup or business process do entrepreneurs need to reach out?**

Any stage! Whether you're just beginning to develop your idea, looking to improve operational efficiency, or seeking funding opportunities, PennTAP can provide valuable guidance and resources tailored to your specific needs. Engaging with PennTAP early on ensures you can leverage their expertise to build a strong foundation, avoid common pitfalls, and accelerate your path to success.

**What can entrepreneurs expect to gain?**

Entrepreneurs partnering with PennTAP will gain expert advice to enhance efficiency, access funding opportunities, and connect with valuable resources. This support helps them innovate, cut costs and grow their businesses sustainably.

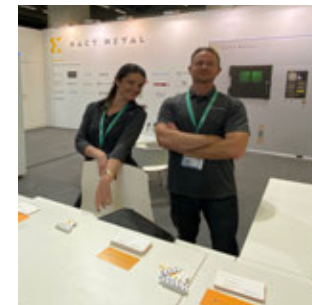
You can learn more about these services at [www.penntap.psu.edu](http://www.penntap.psu.edu).

# Ben Franklin Technology Partners is the best friend you'll find



When meeting other area entrepreneurs and startup founders, Juan Mario Gomez, CEO of Xact Metal, says one of the first things he asks them is, "Have you talked to Ben Franklin yet?"

Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania has played a significant role in Xact Metal's expansive growth over the last eight years. During the initial forming days, the company, which specializes in affordable metal 3d printing, participated in the Ben Franklin TechCelerator program. Since then, it has benefited from several rounds of Ben Franklin funding — from its initial start-up, during the Covid-19 pandemic and through its expansion.



"Ben Franklin helped us with the initial funding where we needed start-up capital and has been our partner since then, even through difficult times. If Ben Franklin had not stepped in during Covid, together with the Chamber of Business & Industry of Centre County (CBICC) and the College Township, we would have been in trouble," Gomez explained.



"We had just added a lot of people. We were estimating growth and suddenly the orders disappeared. They were able to help us through that and they were able to help us grow and position ourselves in a way that we would be able to attract further options for capital."

However, Ben Franklin offers so much more than funding. Gomez noted that the team's business mentoring and advising, as well as ability to make connections and open doors, has also been important for Xact's growth.

"That has helped just as much or more than the funding, in a sense," said Gomez, "because Ben Franklin is able to bring its experience and provide a sounding board to a young company."

In many ways, too, he added, being a Ben Franklin-supported company is almost like a stamp of approval. The distinction carries a lot of weight and it's a bit of a "merit badge."

He summed up, "Ben Franklin is the best friend you're going to find when you're a young company — and the friendliest money you'll find."

Todd Erdley, Central Region director and portfolio manager at Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania, praised Gomez and Xact Metal's work, saying, "Juan Mario Gomez is a seasoned business leader with a distinguished career at GE. This background, combined with early-stage technology brought forth from Penn State in 3d metal printing, has been foundational to the outstanding growth of

Xact Metal. Having a seasoned leader like Juan Mario was a catalyst to Ben Franklin Technology Partners wanting to support his vision and the company growth. Ben Franklin Technology Partners take great pride in what Juan Mario and the Xact Metal team have done to impact the 3d metal printing industry and we look forward to on-going success."

**Learn more about Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania at [cnp.benfranklin.org](http://cnp.benfranklin.org).**



# SHOP THE *Alleghenies*

Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon and Somerset Counties

Shopping local is easier than ever during one of the best times of year in the Alleghenies: market season! From locally grown to locally made, markets are great spots to visit for a huge selection of local items you simply won't find anywhere else!



Since launching in July 2023, the **Alleghenies Marketplace** has been a source for shoppers from around the Alleghenies, across the country, and even around the world to find unique items made right here by locally owned small businesses. Merchants are always adding new and seasonal inventory and the online shopping destination is growing all the time with new merchants and offerings. Don't miss out! Follow the Alleghenies Marketplace on Facebook and Instagram for great gift ideas, seasonal products, and much more!

Visit our website [www.AllegheniesMarketplace.com](http://www.AllegheniesMarketplace.com)  
and follow us on Facebook and Instagram  
for great gift ideas, seasonal products, and much more!