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*Sunday Dispatch*

An edition of TIMES LEADER

SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 2018



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# Parrish Transportation Company: Serving Pittstonians for nearly a century

By Gene Axton  
For Sunday Dispatch

PITTSTON— Charles Esposito and Joseph Lobrutto's company has been responsible for transporting Pittstonians for almost a century.

Started 85 years ago by their grandfather Cologero Lobrutto, Yatesville Bus Company was headquartered across the street from the flatiron building in Pittston City. In 1963, the company moved to its current location at 1095 S. Township Blvd. and, later that decade, Yatesville Bus Company purchased the Dunmore-based Parrish Transportation Company.

In 1988, cousins Charles, 57, and Joseph, 59, took over Yatesville Bus Company from the three-person team that included their uncle Sam Lobrutto and their fathers, Carmen Esposito and Louis Lobrutto.

As third-generation owners, Charles and Joseph, both of Pittston, were tasked with continuing tradition while modernizing the business to compete in a changing world. In the early 2000s, that modernization drew them away from one service that was beginning to decline: charter busses.

"The coaches were seven days a week, 24 hours a day," Charles said. "We got older. It



Aimee Dilger|Times Leader

**Charles Esposito, Kim McGinty, Carol Casterline and Joseph Lobrutto of Parrish Limousine in Pittston.**

was a good business, I mean, we were making money, but it was taking a toll on us."

Joseph said the co-owners do a little bit of everything — garage work, driving, whatever is needed. With the demand of the charter bus business taking its toll on the two, they decided to sell their busses. Joseph said the decision was a fortuitous one from a business perspective.

"We got out of it probably a good time because, a few years later, Pennsylvania got gambling and everything and a lot of bus companies folded."

After selling the charter busses, Charles and Joseph needed to find a new source of income. The answer was in a market the two wanted to enter for a long time.

"We always wanted to get into the limo business and then when we sold the coach business, we needed something," Joseph said. "It was the perfect opportunity."

The pair purchased two limousines, attached the long-owned Parrish name to their new venture and began taking bookings. Today, Parrish Limousines' fleet is 10 vehicles strong with options available for birthday parties, bachelor and bachelorette parties, weddings, concerts, wine tours and more.

Five years ago, Charles and Joseph pur-



Aimee Dilger|Times Leader

**The inside of one of the Parrish Limousine buses.**



Aimee Dilger|Times Leader

**Parrish Limousine and Yatesville Bus company have been a staple in the Pittston Area for years.**

chased Custom Trim Inc., a vinyl decal shop for automobiles and signs that sat adjacent to their building. Charles said that's the extent of their business expansion.

"We're comfortable right where we are," he said.

Yatesville Bus Company's umbrella now includes Parrish Limousines and Custom Trim Inc., but Charles and Joseph never strayed away from the business' roots. They currently hold contracts with Pittston Area School District, Scranton Preparatory School, Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre and Dunmore's Holy Cross High School.

Joseph said Yatesville Bus affords him one of his favorite parts of the job.

"Driving the elementary kids," Joseph said. "They're a lot of fun."

Charles said continuing the family tradition by serving their hometown and surrounding communities is something in which the two take pride.

"It's been an honor all these years, it really has," Charles said. "We've been lucky. We were very lucky."

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# Family and friends use the back door at Arcaro & Genell

By Gene Axton  
For Sunday Dispatch

OLD FORGE — Arcaro & Genell owner Angelo Genell has a special name for the back door of his restaurant.

"We don't consider that the kitchen door; we consider that the family and friends door," he said. "Family and friends, they walk through the kitchen to come to the restaurant. Some restaurants put tables in the kitchen as a novelty, but people just come in there automatically."

That list of family and friends started in 1962 when Angelo's parents Angelo and Marie Genell went into business with Marie's brothers, Frank and Anthony Arcaro. They purchased Laurenzi's Restaurant at 443 S. Main St., lent their surnames in alphabetical order and started a tradition that continues with Angelo and his brother, Mark.

Angelo, 58, said 2018 marks 40 years working at the restaurant in an official capacity. He doesn't count the years he wasn't paid.

"We lived upstairs, so we were always downstairs helping our family," Angelo said. "The next thing you know, 40 years have gone by."

During that time, he and Mark learned the family recipes they keep alive today, including their pizza's cheese blend, which

Mark calls "top secret."

Angelo said their pizza's popularity can be attributed to a number of things — its rectangular shape, its balance between heavy and light, its aforementioned cheese blend — but the most alluring aspect has nothing to do with the pie.

"Basically, I think it's that you're eating it in Old Forge," Angelo said. "It's a destination spot."

For Tunkhannock resident Kathy Williams, an Old Forge tray runs "nose and nose" with New York pizza — and she has the experience to weigh in on the matter.

"I'm originally from New Jersey and I never tasted pizza like this. I love it," Williams said.

Old Forge is where Arcaro & Genell plans to stay, too. Instead of opening more locations, Angelo and Mark have opted to expand the existing building, with a restaurant remodel and the addition of a takeaway counter, both completed within the last five years. Mark said the takeaway counter has been a success with customers able to grab everything from desserts and gift baskets to pre-cooked pizza.

Arcaro's The Next Generation opened recently in Pittston City by Francine Arcaro-Branas, a descendant of Frank Arcaro, one of the four founding partners of Arcaro & Genell. Angelo and Mark have no involve-



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Ashley McDonough prepares the banquet hall suitable for parties, reunions, breavements, or weddings.**



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Mark Genell gets busy making Arcaro & Genell's famous white pizza.**

ment with that business; Francine is their cousin.

Along with its Italian dining experience, Arcaro & Genell also keeps another Italian tradition alive: bocce. The outdoor game, which originated in Ancient Rome, traveled with Italian immigrants to their new homes. Today, Angelo said it's become a popular pastime at the restaurant.

"We're involved with the bocce leagues with the Sons of Italy in Old Forge, and it's starting to be a place where a lot of people can have fundraisers and raise money in a fun way," Angelo said.

Angelo said he doesn't think of hosting bocce leagues and perpetuating his family recipes as consciously keeping tradition alive. He said it's something he and Mark do automatically.

"It's just part of your makeup. You can't make that happen, you know what I mean," Angelo said. "It's just the way we were brought up."

There's a list of kitchen-door-using family and friends who'd probably argue they were raised properly.

**Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at [sd@psdispatch.com](mailto:sd@psdispatch.com).**



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Employee Ashley McDonough stands with Angelo Genell, owner of Arcaro & Genell's in their added take-out area.**

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# Greater Pittston YMCA first opened its doors in 1883

By Tony Callaio  
For Sunday Dispatch

PITTSTON — If you take a poll in the Greater Pittston area asking, “How long do you think the Greater Pittston YMCA has been in existence?” nobody would ever guess 135 years. But it’s true. The YMCA opened its doors in 1883.

In fact, many would think the YMCA has only been around since 1983 when the organization moved to its current location on Main Street.

The YMCA has been many things to many people over the last century, including offering housing to young men in the 1860s to teaching swimming from 1909 and taking part in the first Health Kids Day in 1992.

The building that housed the original YMCA was at the corner of Broad and Church Streets where St. John the Evangelist’s parking lot is how stands.

A longtime YMCA administrator,

instructor and friend to all, the late Jack Evans once said he probably taught just about everyone in Pittston how to swim. Of course, he was being facetious but, if one had taken a head count, he just might have been right.

In addition to a swimming pool, the Broad Street building housed a basketball court with an overhead running track equipped with a fireman’s pole and a handball court.

When an arsonist’s hand touched the YMCA on Broad Street in the early 80s, a new location was sought and the Main Street site was chosen.

The current YMCA houses a pool, gym, fitness center, aerobics studio, sauna/steam rooms, daycare and playground.

Pittston Twp. native and resident Leslie Widdick has been the executive director for the past two years and is always looking for ways to improve programs and activities. One decision her administration made was making guest fees a flat rate of \$5, lowering the rate in most cases. Guests are allowed to visit the facility as many times as they wish.

“We used to have daily rates for different people and most of our daily fees are from kids. That’s why we lowered the guest rate to \$5 across the board,” said membership director Emily Azocar.

“There’s definitely been an increase in membership; we’re not where we want to be,” Widdick said. “Even if it’s only five new people in a month and the following

month, 10 people are seeing what we have to offer.”

Widdick went on to say new members get to see what the YMCA has to offer. “We just don’t have aerobics classes; we are not just treadmills and weights.”

Daniel Luvender, chief volunteer officer, focuses on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Where the YMCA was a one-time male focused agency, its doors are now open to all.

You can find group exercise programs or personal training with Candy Lombardo, CPTA Lucas Jurchak and personal trainers. For questions about training, you can reach Candy at [candy.lombardo@baml.com](mailto:candy.lombardo@baml.com).

The “Y” offers American Red Cross Lifeguard courses and certification programs as well as swimming lessons.

Brandon Hampton, YMCA Family & Youth director, oversees the Child Care and Child Watch programs that includes preschool and after-school programs. Daycare has been discontinued. You can reach Brandon at 570-655-2255, ext. 103 for information about those programs mentioned.

The Pittston YMCA offers five birthday party packages. Call the Member Services desk at 570-655-2255, ext. 107 for pricing and availability.

Emily Richters, MS RDN LDN, a Registered Dietician, is on hand to help anyone seeking a healthier lifestyle. Schedule an appointment at the Member Services desk or reach out to Emily at [nutrition@thegreaterpittstonymca.org](mailto:nutrition@thegreaterpittstonymca.org) to schedule



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Shown are: Emily Azocar, left, membership director and Leslie Widdick, executive director of the Pittston YMCA.

personal counseling with several packages to choose from.

The YMCA hosts many special programs for the community all-year round such as Mardi Gras Aqua Aerobics Party, Egg Dip for Easter, Halloween Party, Santa Swim, and the Jack-O-Lantern Jog, a three-mile job that utilizes trails in Pittston. You can follow the Pittston YMCA on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/greaterpittstonymca/](http://www.facebook.com/greaterpittstonymca/) or go to [www.greaterpittstonymca.org](http://www.greaterpittstonymca.org).

Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at [sd@psdispatch.com](mailto:sd@psdispatch.com).

## Joyce Insurance Group: Committed to Pittston for more than 60 years

By Geri Gibbons  
For Sunday Dispatch

When the Joyce Insurance Group moved to downtown Pittston in 1992, it was to a boarded-up building.

Joseph J. Joyce Sr., who founded the insurance group in 1955 in the basement of his parents’ home, however, knew exactly what he was doing when he chose to relocate to the dilapidated property across the street from a few buildings severely damaged by fire.

He simply wanted to help the city of Pittston recover from a series of unfortunate happenings.

His sons Bill, John and Joe, who now run the company, say their dad wanted to be part of the Renaissance of the city and he wanted to do so by focusing on all the needs of its residents, not just their insur-

ance needs.

As they gathered over coffee on a recent morning, taking time to look back on the history of their business, the brothers said they feel the company has done just that.

“Dad wanted us to stay in Pittston,” said Bill. “He felt we had a duty to the city.”

The brothers take that duty seriously.

“We’re a part of the community. We take part in the parades, in the Tomato Festival,” said Joe. “We help community organizations, including the Care & Concern Clinic.”

The brothers, who have seen the revitalization of the city become a reality, say it was made possible by the spirit of cooperation that permeates Pittston.

“The mayor and council may have had differences, but they were always willing to work together,” said Joe.

John said it is the spirit of cooperation and willingness to work together that has made it a pleasure to do business on North Main Street for over 25 years.

The company’s success has spilled over, not only to its customers, but to its employees.

“We’ve provided a table environment for employees,” said Bill. “They’re situated comfortably.”

Indeed, the brothers said, one employee has been with the company for 60 years.

As Joe makes his way through the building, commenting on its history and its staff,

it is apparent the leadership of the company is willing to think “outside the box.”

“When we needed more space, we originally thought we were going to add a floor or expand the property,” said Joe. “But when that didn’t work out, we came down the basement.”

And expand to the basement they did, in an “industrial chic” setting that at first the brothers didn’t think would work.

But it did work, and Joe’s enthusiasm and good spirit as he walks through the basement with its animal skin patterns, strung lights and trendy furniture, makes it apparent it’s one of his favorite parts of the building.

Complete with a community area, wide screen TV and exercise room, the basement area also serves to reinforce the business’s commitment to its employees and to the community.

“During parades, we invite people to come downstairs and have something to eat,” said Joe. “Employees often work out after work.”

There is one part of the basement, however, which stops Joe in his tracks.

As he walks by a photo of his brother Mike who passed away in 2006, he recalls the courageous battle he fought against head and neck cancer.

During the 14 months Mike spent in that battle, he asked that his friends raise money to support other families who might

not be capable of handling the financial burden of long-distance treatment, establishing Miles for Michael, a nonprofit organization. The photo depicts Mike at the nonprofit’s first event.

“He held on to be there,” remembered Joe. “He died the next week.”

Miles for Michael, managed through the Luzerne Foundation, provides debit cards for families battling cancer.

“They might use the money to travel to the hospital or for somewhere to stay,” he said. “We want to provide them with what they need.”

Joyce Insurance Group now has five locations: Pittston, Nanticoke, Old Forge, Hazleton and Allentown.

According to its website, it has been in business for 62 years, has 17 professional agents and nearly 6,000 customers.

There are 60 employees, many of whom have been with the business for decades.

With nearly \$60 million in annual sales, the business looks to the future with enthusiasm.

“We look forward to passing the business on to the next generation,” said John. “They share our commitment to our customers, to the community and to the city.”

Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at [sd@psdispatch.com](mailto:sd@psdispatch.com).



Submitted photo

From left, William Joyce Sr., John Joyce, Joe Joyce

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# Majestic Lunch: New York City kidnapping led to life in small town

By Geri Gibbons  
For Sunday Dispatch



Sean McKeag | Sunday Dispatch

**Harry Salavantis, owner of Majestic Lunch, poses for a portrait during lunch at his South Main Street restaurant in Pittston.**

Had Harry Salavantis not been kidnapped from his family's apartment in the early 1950s, the Majestic Lunch, which sits at 20 S. Main St., Pittston, might not have become the family business.

On a recent Saturday afternoon, as Salavantis sat enjoying a few "Texas Wieners" for which the eatery is known, he recalled the story of his parents moving from New York City with three small children to make a better, safer life.

"I was taken by a man that the neighbor watching me thought was my uncle," he said. "When my mother realized I had been taken, she frantically searched the neighborhood. She found me because I was crying so loud because I just wanted to go home."

When his parents Stanley and Nitsa Salavantis had the opportunity, along with Stanley's sister Dena and her husband John Lekas, to buy the Pittston restaurant from the Stathakis family in 1954, they jumped at the chance to raise their family in a small town setting.

The eatery had already been established as the "Majestic Lunch" with its signature hotdog, complete with its unique chili sauce a favorite of locals, when Stanley took over.

Harry remembers his father working up to 16 hours to make the restaurant a success.

"We were the first family with air conditioning on our block," Harry said. "Because my dad would work until three in the afternoon and come home to sleep for a few hours during the hottest part of the day and then go back and work until late at night."

During those first years, Majestic Lunch was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"It never closed," said Salavantis. "They came after basketball games, after church, after social events; we were a destination."

When Stanley retired in 1998, rumors were rampant that the business was going to close.

"He actually starts winding down, stopped ordering supplies and food," Harry said of his father.

But, Harry wouldn't let that happen. He couldn't let his father down.

Days before the business was to close, Harry told his father he had decided to take over.

"I did it for my father. He had put his whole life into it," he said. "He was a quiet man, but I know he was grateful."

As a matter of fact, up until in 2016 when Stanley died, Harry referred to the business as his father's.

"After he retired, he was still here," he said. "He just wasn't involved in daily activities."

From the beginning, the restaurant was a family affair.

"When I was 9, my job was to trim the hotdogs when they came in linked together," he said.

When he got older, Harry held the midnight to 2:30 a.m. shift on the weekends.

"That's when a lot of people came in," he said. "At 11, there would be no one here, then an hour later, everybody."

Harry Salavantis' willingness to work hard and love for family continued to the next generation with all his children, including Luzerne County District Attorney Stefanie Salavantis, having spent many hours behind the grill and serving customers.

"They did it with a great attitude," he said. "They learned the value of work."

Not only was the eatery the basis for Salavantis' family history, it also impacted the family history of many other area residents.

"Many couples met here after a dance and have been married for years," he said.

Salavantis is quick to share stories with customers, not only because he loves talking with people, but because the stories themselves provide a bit of history.

"If we don't tell them now, they will be lost forever," he said.

One of those stories has to do with the hotdogs' travels across the country.



Sean McKeag | Sunday Dispatch

**Pete Pezzino, 82, of Pittston, poses for picture as he has coffee in Majestic Lunch on Pittston's South Main Street. Pezzino moved to Pittston 41 years ago and was friends with the late owner Stanley Salavantis.**

"One man comes and takes about 30 of our hotdogs to Las Vegas," he said. "We wrap them as best we could, but I'm sure the plane smells like onions. Then, when he gets there, he and his friends microwave them. Can you imagine that? Las Vegas with so many different kinds of food to choose from, and they're eating our hot dogs."

Salavantis said part of the secret of his success are loyal and trusted employees.

"Many have been here for many years," he said. "They're like family."

Customers, too, have become like family to Salavantis. He still occasionally "flips" hamburgers and, as he does, a small crowd often gathers around him, sharing greetings and memories.

Pete Pezzino is one of those customers and recently took time to share memories with Harry.

At 83, Pezzino was a customer from before the Salavantis family took the reins of the restaurant.

He remembers Stanley with fondness, recalling when the restaurant would fill with young customers late at night.

When asked about his favorite item on the menu, Pezzino paused for a few seconds and then said, "Well, anything."

Although the restaurant isn't Salavantis' primary business, it is an anchor for his family and offers a sense of community.

"I try to do business here in the Pittston area," he said. "We're all neighbors."

Salavantis said the restaurant has added cheesesteaks and gyros to its menus in the last several years, but he doesn't anticipate much will change as time goes on.

"We simply give our customers what we want," he said.



The late Stanley Salavantis is shown here at Majestic Lunch in Pittston.

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# Pittston Area School District: Where academic achievement and student safety come first

By Tony Callaio  
For Sunday Dispatch

Kevin Booth wears two hats as superintendent of the Pittston Area School District (PASD); one of an overseer of students, faculty and support staff and the other as the CEO of a \$48 million corporation.

Booth, 47, has been superintendent for nearly three years now and has a lot on his plate. Not only does he have to worry about the academic achievements of 3,300 students, he also has to worry about their safety.

"It's been a learning curve and economics is a huge challenge and what the state will give you or how much you have to raise taxes on people is a tough decision," Booth said. He went on to say that learning about the economics involved in running a school and actually doing it are two different things.

The 1989 PASD graduate said, "When you go through all the school finance classes, you get an idea but you don't realize the constraints and how much money is already tied up in salaries and benefits. Once you pay that, there's not much left over."

According to Booth, 75 to 80 percent of the school district budget is salary and benefits.

"When you get into this (superintendent position), you don't realize you are the CEO of a \$48 million company and you have 400 employees and the profit that you make is the kids that get out of here and do something with themselves," he said. "It isn't necessarily a monetary profit."

With the current budget, PASD has a payroll consisting of 209 faculty and 128 support staff with an 18:1 teacher/student ratio topping the state average of 15:1. Male to female student ratio is near 50 percent. The proposed budget for 2018-2019 will top \$50 million.

Pittston Area became a school district in the fall of 1966 and, in 2017 the district honored the first class of 1967 at graduation.

Pittston Area School District (PASD) is comprised of the city of Pittston, the towns of Avoca, Dupont, Duryea, Hughestown, Yatesville, and the townships of Jenkins and Pittston. Martin L. Mattei served as the first superintendent of the newly formed school district from 1966 to 1982.

According to Clairellen Hopple, PASD board secretary, superintendents that followed Mattei, in order, are: Gerard Musto (1982-1993), Frank Serino (1993-2006), Ross Scarantino (2006-2009), George Cosgrove (2009-2012), Michael Garzella (2012-2015) and Kevin Booth (2015 to present).

Today, the PASD houses 3,303 students at the senior high school in Yatesville (grades 9-12), the Martin L. Mattei Middle School in Pittston (grades 5-8), the PASD Intermediate Center in Pittston (grades 2-4), and the PASD Martin Quinn Primary Center in Hughestown (grades K-1). PASD encompasses a 42 square mile area.

The administration consists of the superintendent, director of curriculum, director of special education, director of technology, four principals, and two assistant principals.

The school district currently participates in 18 sanctioned sports programs for boys and girls on the junior and senior high school level.

PASD utilizes the Skyward Family Access program, a web-based information and communication center to provide answers to parents.

Skyward keeps teachers and administrators in touch with parents and parents are able to obtain information about their student's daily work. Parents have access to grades, daily assignments, attendance, class schedules and more. It's a way of making the students' schooling transparent and making parents accountable.

Parents and teachers can respond to each other via a message center and parents are also able to pay for food services for their child. According to Booth, it is mandatory for teachers to participate in the Skyward program.

An alert system is in place through Skyward, informing parents about emergency alerts, attendance notifications, etc. through email, social media or text messages.

"The amount of information available to parents makes it very difficult for a parent to say they were not aware of their child's schooling," Booth said. "Schooling is no longer a mystery to parents like it was years ago when parents were not aware of their child's progress until a report card was issued." Set up can be done on the school's website at <https://www.pittstonarea.com/index.php/family-access>.

[www.pittstonarea.com/index.php/family-access](https://www.pittstonarea.com/index.php/family-access).

PASD has partnered with the Pennsylvania Dept. of Education to provide a toll-free number for the prevention of bullying. The consultation number is 1-866-716-0424.

"We now have to become experts in safety drills," Booth said. "We have instituted building level safety and security teams to do an analysis of their buildings to bring that to the larger district committee."

PASD has a School Resource Officer and is currently looking for a second one. Booth went on to say the district is equipped with \$60,000 worth of security cameras throughout all buildings.

Recently, a PASD senior reviewed the school district on Niche.com, an online school-ranking site. The review read: "The atmosphere at Pittston Area high schools is absolutely amazing. The teachers and staff go out of their way to help me with anything I need. They have a diverse option of clubs and sports that give so many people a chance to connect with other students. The staff does whatever they can do to help you and whoever needs help whether it is a tiny problem and/or a big problem. The kids are so nice and just overall great people. I love my school and I believe everyday, people in our school are so open to listen to others opinions, even when they do not agree on them. This is an amazing school and I give it a 5 star review!"

Another senior remarked, "I liked the way the teachers made themselves available to help if I needed it. They were always willing to answer any questions that I had."



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Pittston Area conducts freshman orientation prior to the start of every school year where students and their parents get acclimated to the high school.**



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Pittston Area Superintendent Kevin Booth is seated at his desk in the administration suite where he oversees 3,300 students, nearly 400 staff and a \$48 million budget.**



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Members of the Pittston Area High School Class of 1967, the district's first graduating class, were honored at the 2017 graduation at Charlie Trippi Stadium.**



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Pittston Area hosts many extracurricular activities, including a mock car crash sponsored by the Stand Tall Club.**



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Pittston Area excels in many sporting programs, 18 in all. Shown is Kyle Ralston delivering a pitch at a game at PNC Park, home of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Railriders.**

**Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at [sd@psdispatch.com](mailto:sd@psdispatch.com).**

# The Greater Pittston Chamber of Commerce congratulates Chamber Members celebrating 50 + years in Business!



For more information  
and upcoming events please visit:

[www.pittstonchamber.org](http://www.pittstonchamber.org)

Greater Pittston Chamber of Commerce  
PO BOX 704 – Pittston, PA 18640  
PH: 570.655.1424 E: [info@pittstonchamber.org](mailto:info@pittstonchamber.org)

**CHEERS To all the Greater Pittston area  
businesses established for over  
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