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Sunday Dispatch

An edition of TIMES LEADER

SUNDAY, JUNE 24, 2018



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Fino's Pharmacy in Pittston is a family affair

By Gene Axton
For Sunday Dispatch

Pharmacies dot Pittston's downtown, but competition isn't what drives Vincent Peck III.

"I don't worry about them; I just worry about us," said Peck, owner of Fino's Pharmacy on Main Street. "I don't worry about what they do; I worry about what we do."

For Peck, the important things Fino's does include free delivery and 24-hour emergency service.

"If somebody needs something, they need it," he said. "They come first."

This mentality has driven Fino's "every day since ever,"

Peck said. For the pharmacy, "ever" dates back to 1957 when Pat Fino founded the eponymous store at 14 N. Main St. In 1962, a fire forced the pharmacy to move to its current location at 32 N. Main St. In 1967, the shop was passed down to a second generation when Pat passed away.

That generation included Mike and Vincent's mother Mary Ann, who owned the shop until her death in 2010. Vincent and his wife Annette then became third-generation owners, while Mike and his wife Judy still work in the shop to this day.

A former CPA who began working at the shop with her husband in the early '90s,



Sean McKeag | Sunday Dispatch

Vince Peck with his father and Fino's Pharmacy owner Vince Peck stand behind long-time employee Jack McCawley, of Pittston, and pharmacy student Avery Hassey, of Exeter.

Story continued on page 4



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Annette does “what everyone else doesn’t want to.” She maintains the pharmacy’s books, handles billing, acts as an on-site HIPAA officer, handles Medicare issues and more.

She enjoys working at the shop because the patrons make it a delight.

“We have some really great customers, really just some nice, nice people, and it’s pleasant to come to work and be able to see these people,” Annette said. “If I’m redoing the card racks and I’m up to my elbows with dusting, I’ll hear, ‘Hi, how are you doing? You’re doing a good job.’ They’ll share some things about their lives, they’ll compliment you on things, they’re just nice people.”

Vince Peck IV returned to the shop for that very reason after studying pharmacy at

Temple.

“Everybody’s like family,” he said. “Multiple generations of families have been coming in here and, our generation, they’re still coming in because their parents come in.”

Along with Vince, 34, the fourth generation at Fino’s Pharmacy includes Nick, 30, Dominick, 26, and Alexandra, 19. Nick handles the shop’s marketing and does a majority of product buying, while Dominick is a pharmaceutical sales representative in California who does some buying for the family business. Alexandra works at Fino’s and is studying to be a dentist at The University of Scranton.

Vincent started working at the pharmacy when he was 10, and he “loves” working with his family by his side.

“I don’t know if they love it so much,” he said. “I get to see them every day.”

His oldest son, who started at the shop when he was 16, echoed his father’s senti-



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Co-owner Vince Peck works to fill prescriptions at Fino’s Pharmacy on Main Street in Pittston.



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Fino’s Pharmacy sits proudly on Main Street in Pittston.



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Diabetic shoes can be purchased at Fino’s Pharmacy in Pittston.

ments.

“It’s rewarding and challenging at the same time,” Vince said. “Working with family can be tough sometimes, but I love what I do and it’s better to work with family than strangers. It isn’t like going to work every day here.”

Fino’s has also given Vincent and Annette an extended family, which includes pharmacy tech interns and employees like Jack McCawley,

82, who has worked with the family since he was 17.

Jack loves what he does — serving the community as a pharmacy tech — because it’s “all about the people.”

For the crew at Fino’s, their extended family seems to include the people of Greater Pittston, too.

Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at sd@psdispatch.com.

Fox Hill Country Club

At 98 years old, it is still one of premiere golf clubs

By Tony Callaio
For Sunday Dispatch

Fox Hill Country Club has been around for a very long time – 98 years to be exact. And it is still one of the premiere golf clubs in northeast Pennsylvania.

Established in 1920 by a group of local businessmen seeing the need for a golf course, this members-only golf club is known for its challenging layout and beautiful surroundings.

There were many sites considered but, on June 23, 1920, the site along the borders of West Pittston and Exeter was selected. The only other golf

courses at the time were Scranton Country Club and Wyoming Valley Country Club. Fox Hill was a perfect location to fill the need of golfers in greater Pittston.

At first, Fox Hill was a nine-hole course, with its initial layout designed by John Reid. Reid was also selected to be the very first club professional. By the end of 1920, the membership grew to 232 and, on April 21, 1921, the course was ready for play.

Memberships grew rapidly early on and the need to expand from nine holes to a regulation 18-hole course became apparent. A.W. Tillinghast was



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Golfers tee off on Fox Hill's par 4, 403-yards, No. 1 hole.

hired to complete the last nine holes in 1924. In three short years, Fox Hill Country Club had become a well-established club.

“Tillie” Tillinghast was one of America’s greatest golf course architects, designing more than 250 courses, includ-

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Fox Hill 
Country Club

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The spacious Fox Hill Country Club Clubhouse was renovated in 1999.



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Fox Hill Country Club pro shop employee Chuck Karcutskie checks tee times with a member on the phone.



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

The golf course at Fox Hill is green and lush with the picturesque Campbell's Ledge off in the distance.

ing Baltusrol Golf Club (upper and lower), Winged Foot Golf Club, San Francisco Golf Club, and Winged Foot Golf Club (east and west) – all of which have been the sites of top pro tournaments over the decades.

As of April 2018, the local club has 304 social members and 373 golfers and spouses members, totaling 677.

Jason Tribbet, of Pittston, is enjoying his second year as a club member. "I enjoy the proximity to where I live," Tribbet said. "I can come over and hit the range or I can play nine holes very quick. The pro shop is stocked with great equipment and the restaurant is fantastic."

In addition to an excellent course, the clubhouse became well known for fine food, beverages and banquet facilities over the decades.

The clubhouse was completely renovated 19 years ago, bringing it into the 21st century.

The club offers four types of memberships: individual golf memberships, social memberships, non-resident memberships and junior memberships. Applications may be found on the club's website at www.foxhillcountryclub.net.

Fox Hill Country Club is a member of the Golf Association of Philadelphia and the Anthracite Golf Association. The largest golf tournament held there is the John Allan three-day member/guest event known as one of the area's top tournament, showcasing the area's best golfers combined with



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

The Grillroom at Fox Hill Country Club gets plenty of use by golfers.

out-of-the-area golf talent.

The Proshop has top brand equipment and accessories available to members or the general public for sale.

Member Tony Cella, 77, has been retired as the club's head pro for 18 years, but still enjoys going to the club. "The golf course has changed in some areas over the years and probably plays faster these days," Cella said. The course is 6,555 yards long from the pro tees down to 4,464 yards, making it a par 71 course."

The golf staff consists of Francis Hayes, PGA head golf pro; Cleve Coldwater, PGA teaching pro; Ross Brown, PGA first assistant golf pro; and Victoria Petrosky, second assistant golf pro.

The club's banquet facilities have hosted birthday parties, proms, weddings, graduations, class reunions, Chamber of Commerce events and much, much more.

Many years ago, the banquet hall was only utilized by members and their families, but over the years, the club has opened its doors to non-members, providing they are sponsored by an active member.

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Agolino's Restaurant

Owner Joe Agolino Sr. says he's 'content'

By Tony Callaio
For Sunday Dispatch

The owner of Agolino's Restaurant is a content person, even though his establishment was ravished by floodwaters in 1972 and again in 2011. How can that be? It's easy. Joe Agolino, Sr. believes he has the best kitchen staff, the best servers and, most of all, the best clients.

Family owned and operated, Agolino's has been located on Luzerne Avenue West Pittston since 1955 when Sam Agolino, Sr. opened a pool hall a few blocks from the current establishment at 22 Luzerne Ave.

Sam purchased the property at 22 Luzerne Ave. in 1962 where, according to son Joe, Sr., five pool tables existed.

Over time, Sam's wife Betty began to make hot dogs and hamburgers at the Agolino home-stead just a few doors down from the pool hall. "My mother would make the food and we'd have to

run the food over to the pool hall," Joe, Sr. said. That was the beginning of what eventually turned out to be the premiere establishment it is today.

With the popularity of Betty's cooking, Sam made a decision to add a kitchen in the rear of the building and to legitimize the establishment as a restaurant in the early 1970s. Soon, the pool tables were replaced by dining booths and a counter.

Brian "Buzzy" Budzak has been on the cooking staff for 29 years and has seen a lot of changes. "Volume, the volume has picked up drastically since the expansion of the dining room that was added in 1998," Budzak said. "When I first started we would serve, on average, 80 meals at dinner time. Today, we will serve 200-300 dinners on a Saturday and as much as 600 on a Sunday."

One such customer is Barbara Moore, of Pittston. The retired Wyoming Area teacher used to frequently accompany her late mother to Agolino's. "It's a great staff and great food and the prices are so reasonable. My mom loved coming here as I do," Moore said.

The 185-seat restaurant features two dining areas and a counter area. A private room can be used for meetings, parties or small bereavement dinners up to 24 people. With the exception of the private dining



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Servers Brianna Baldygo, left, and Janice Knorr offer each other a helping hand during breakfast at Agolino's Restaurant.

room, Agolino's does not take reservations.

Business hasn't always been a bed of roses for the Agolino family, though. Flooding from the Susquehanna River looms over the establishment. In 1972, the first floor sustained less than a foot of water, but in 2011, the restaurant, along with the entire town of West Pittston, was devastated by Hurricane Lee.

The entire restaurant was inundated with seven feet of water, but Joe, Sr. was determined to rebuild, remodel and come back. Come back he did. Several months after the flood, Agolino's was back in business with a new look.

Since 2011, the Agolino family acquired the parking lot across the street and the corner lot next door where a bank once stood to accommodate all customers with off-street parking. That was the final page missing in Joe Agolino's plan. "We bought three lots that surrounded the restaurant and now we're in good shape."

Joe is now semi-retired, keeping his hand in the business, but he's also ready to pass the baton to his four children, Sam, Corinne, Lisa and Joe Jr., all of whom have their place in the family business.

"They're all (his children) set up," Joe, Sr. said. "I'm in a very content place and I'm happy with the way it's all transpired. I have great repeat clientele, it's a comfortable place, it's casual dining and my staff is consistent that does a great job and people see that and appreciate it."

"I couldn't be a more lucky guy and I wish my mother and father could see how successful the business became," Agolino concluded.

In addition to Agolino's Restaurant in West Pittston, the family also owns Pazzo's Restaurant on Rt. 315 and Bar Pazzo, just off the square in Scranton.

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Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Brian Budzak has been a chef at Agolino's for 29 years.

Modern Gas Sales Inc. started with one location, now has five

By Geri Gibbons
For Sunday Dispatch

At just 3 years old, Victoria Spano feels perfectly at home seated at her great-grandfather's desk at Modern Gas Sales, Inc.

At 90, Edward Gorzkowski, is equally comfortable with Victoria dancing around his office and telling him about her day.

The interaction seems reflective of the culture of the business which has served area residential, commercial and industrial propane customers for over 50 years. Gorzkowski started the business with one pickup truck in the early 50s and has watched it grow to five different locations.

"When my dad started the business, not only did he have only one pickup truck, but he was working other jobs at the

time," said Richard Gorkowski. "He wanted start a business that would benefit the community and be an anchor for his family."

The business has now passed to second and even third generations with sons Richard, Edward and Jay overseeing daily operations.

Granddaughter Lindsey Spano detailed the growth of the business in product, staff and geography.

"We started with one location and now we have five: Nanticoke, Tannersville, Edwardsville, Honesdale and here," she said. "The business has over 50 employees."

And those employees, she said, are prepared not just to keep customers warm in the winter and cooking in the summer, but to do so with a great attitude and understanding of the importance of customer service.



Amanda Hrycyna | For Sunday Dispatch

From left, Shamus Benson, Terry Morgan, Edward Gorzkowski, Sr. and Liam Bell.



Amanda Hrycyna | For Sunday Dispatch

From left, Shamus Benson, Terry Morgan, Edward Gorzkowski, Sr. and Liam Bell.

"Some of our employees have been here throughout our history," she said. "Carl Bonitz is one of those employees."

Bonitz came to the business after he graduated from high school and worked until he retired several years ago.

What truly speaks to the company's treatment of its employees is that Bonitz still comes back to work at Modern even though he is retired.

"If he sees something that needs to be done, he does it," Richard Gorkowski said of Bonitz.

The senior Gorkowski, born in an era without cell phones, social media or GPS, does not let that stop him from embracing technology as an opportunity for company growth and service.

"He might not understand everything about technology," he said. "But, he is excited

about us using it to better our customer experience."

His father, he said, is loved by employees and customers, no matter what their age.

"He gets along well with younger people and he relates with the older people," said Richard Gorkowski.

The business boasts of service to residential and commercial customers at reasonable costs.

Direct delivery of propane to the business makes those low prices possible, according to Spano.

In the meantime, most days find Edward Gorzkowski, Sr. at his desk before everyone else, at the helm of a business that benefits his family, his employees and the community.

"I get here first and I make the coffee," he said, smiling.

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Friedman Electric

Company thrives because of commitment to employees

By Geri Gibbons
For Sunday Dispatch

Friedman Electric had its origins in Pittston in 1935, selling “literally anything that had cord.”

Founder Jack Friedman would travel through the area making extension cords and selling light bulbs from the trunk of his car.

In 1963, the business’s corporate headquarters moved to Exeter, the spot it continues to call home.

From those humble beginnings, the company steadily grew and, by 1995, the company had grown to eight locations. The company now has 15 locations throughout Northeastern and Central

Pennsylvania and New York state.

In 2006, the company became part of Sonapar USA, electrical supply distributors.

Courtney Shatrowskas, marketing director, said much of the stability and success of the company can be attributed to its commitment to its employees.

“A few years after the opening, Robin Rogers and Carol Mazar who are still employed at our Exeter branch, were hired,” she said. “The management at Friedman has passed through many generations of the Friedman family, up until 2006 when Rob Friedman joined the Sonapar USA family, which is made up of the finest electrical sup-

ply distributors in the United States.”

Longevity of employees, she said, is a testament to the character of management.

“We pride ourselves on our commitment to over 200 employees that work at our 15 locations,” she said. “The years of industry experience and knowledge that our employees have is immeasurable.”



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Brian DeFrehn, of Olyphant, checks over inventory at Friedman Electric.

The range and quality of products and services offered, she said, is also unique.

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Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

The Friedman Electric showroom on Wyoming Avenue in Exeter has thousands of tools and equipment for contractor and consumer needs.



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

Courtney Shatrowskas, of Wyoming, an employee in the marketing department, stands by one of many products Friedman carries.

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“We have developed many specialty departments that focus on meeting and exceeding customers’ needs such as generators, commercial lighting, energy solutions, VMI, Tool, Hardware & safety, Voice and Data, just to name a few,” she said. “Aside from our local branch inventory, Friedman offers over 300,000-square foot warehouse distribution with over 30 million dollars in accessible inventory for next day delivery.”

The company’s success, she said, is rooted in its attention to customers’ needs.

“Friedman provides many ways to do business such as counter pickups, with our inside and outside sales

departments, or through the eCommerce site and mobile ordering app,” she said.

And, although the business’ footprint is rather large, its heart is in Exeter.

“Exeter is located in the core part of the Friedman territory, in between our Scranton and Wilkes-Barre stores,” she said. “Exeter is the headquarters for the Friedman Region and houses the executive offices,” she said.

The company anticipates future growth through attention to customers and simplifying the ordering process digital means.”

“We know digital is ever-changing so we are focused on keeping up with the always advancing digital trends,” said Shatrowskas.



Amanda Hrycyna | For Sunday Dispatch

Robin Rogers, a 46-year employee of Friedman Electric, aids a phone customer.

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