

The StrongLand Quickletter

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SERVING SOUTHERN ARMSTRONG & NORTHERN WESTMORLAND COUNTIES

Chamber Mission . . . To advance the economic, industrial, professional, cultural and civic welfare in order to improve the "Quality of Life" in communities served by StrongLand.

HOMEXPO CROWD SURPASSES EXPECTATION ... MORE SALES TAKE PLACE

The StrongLand Home, Garden and Lifestyle Show, held at the Galleria at Pittsburgh Mills on February 11th, 12th, and 13th, 2011, was considered a huge success. For starters, the number of StrongLand HomExpo vendors increased by a whopping **12%!!!** With a good mix of advertising and cooperation from the weather, the attendance figures came in on the positive side of the continuum with a **30%** increase in consumer traffic. Over **75%** of the exhibitors in the show turned in a home show evaluation and their comments gave us a lot to be excited about! On a scale of one to ten (ten being tops), **84%** of those responding gave the StrongLand HomExpo an **8 – 10 overall good rating**, while **no one gave the show a single 1 – 4 rating** in that same category. **77%** of those responding gave the show an **8 - 10 rating** for its ability to produce **contacts that could lead to sales**. Well, isn't that what it's all about! We know we've succeeded when we are helping local businesses stay a step or two ahead of the bills.



I'd like to thank the **HomExpo Committee**, who did a fabulous job to make sure that the StrongLand Chamber provides value added services that really help members survive during these challenging economic times. In addition, please join me in thanking **Thermo-Twin** for being the major sponsor of the event and **Ferguson Heating and Air Conditioning** and **Tee's n Tops** for their **Gold Sponsors** along with **TUDI Mechanical Systems** and **Dr. Dry** who were **Silver Sponsors**. Also, we want to thank **Thomas Tours** and other exhibitors, like the **Arnold Palmer Airport**, for providing some fabulous gifts to the 2011 StrongLand HomExpo participants.

In a few months we will begin planning next year's home show event. If you were not in it this year, please think twice about being a part of next year's show. To be on the 2012 mailing list, please call us at 724.845.5426. ■

LEGISLATIVE CLAMBAKE SET FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2011



The **A-K Federation of Chambers** invites you and your guests to attend the StrongLand Government Reception know as the "**Legislative Clam Bake**" to be held

Thursday, April 28, 2011 at the **River Forest Country Club** from 7 pm to 9 pm. This event, launched 24 years ago, was originally "an actual outdoor" clam bake, with all the amenities. Over the years, due to weather considerations, the event changed its texture but did not change its name, and oh yes, they still have clams on the

extensive buffet. All of our region's legislators have been invited and we hope that local municipalities will be represented, as well. The tone of the event is informal, with no formal political speeches. It's your job to bring on the issues that make a difference in your life. A cash bar and basket raffle round out a perfect evening.

Please see the enclosed flier for all the details and how you might be able to expand the event to include a game of golf, possibly with your elected officials at a reduced rate, thanks to the good people at the River Forest Country Club. ■

Spring 2011 Calendar of Events

- Mar. 08** - Noon - Special Events Committee Meeting, Chamber Office.
- Mar. 09** - 8:30 am - Academic Quiz Bowl Final Meet, Penn State New Kensington
- Mar. 09** - 7:00 pm - Student Entrepreneurial, Penn State New Kensington
- Mar. 10** - 7:30 am - StrongLand Board Meeting, Allegheny Twp. Community Bldg.
- Mar. 14** - Noon - Golf Committee Meeting, Chamber Office
- Mar. 16** - 8:00 am - Government Relations Committee Mtg., McCutcheon Enterprises
- Mar. 16** - 7:00 pm - Student Entrepreneurial, Penn State New Kensington
- Mar. 17** - 12:30 pm - Education Committee Meeting, Parks Bend Conf. Rm.
- Mar. 21** - Noon - Economic Development/KVE Mtg. - Chamber Office
- Mar. 23** - 7:00 pm - Student Entrepreneurial, Penn State New Kensington
- Mar. 30** - 7:00 pm - Student Entrepreneurial, Penn State New Kensington
- Mar. 31** - 8:00 am - Committee Chair Meeting, Giant Eagle Conference Room.
- Apr. 07** - 8:00 am - Membership/Marketing Combine Committee Meeting, Giant Eagle Conference Room
- Apr. 07** - 9:00 am - 5 - year Planning Committee Meeting, Giant Eagle Conference Room

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TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE BETTER WEATHER AHEAD....AND THE STRONGLAND GOLF OUTING

About this time of year, when winter seems like it's NEVER going to end, it's time to "**THINK SPRING**" and anticipate the warm weather that WILL be coming, soon. As I traveled down the highway last week, just after that surprise storm, I came upon a small groundhog lying beside the road that had given its little life up to oncoming traffic, I said to myself.... "**Phil, this serves you right for misleading us about spring!!!**" Later on I felt so bad for those terrible thoughts that I promised myself to become more positive about the weather and life in general, so I **forced myself to focus on better days to come** when the **StrongLand Golf Outing** would take place on **Friday, June 24th** at the **Apollo Elks Lodge #386** in Spring Church.

Now, imagine it's June and you're standing there on the tee in the warm sun, sizing up a par three drive **you think you can "ace,"** or get darn close trying. You realize that you could possibly win **\$5,000 big ones** with a little bit of luck. Your mind flashes momentarily to the feeling of pride you'll get among your peers if, God willing, you make the shot. You stand poised, remembering everything you have ever been taught to make the perfect shot... **Shoulders back, chin down; keeping your eye on the ball, you draw your club back and carefully swing in a perfect circle around your axis.** If you're like me, your dream of **how you want to spend the money** comes to a "**screeching**" halt as the bottom of your golf club barely brushes the ball and sends it in a skipping, spiraling manner over the asphalt trail and into the forest. Then turning to your "**friends**" with a sheepish smile, you say, "**Am I allowed to use one of my mulligan's now?**"

All kidding aside, we would like to invite you to play in one of the Alle-Kiski Region's longest running and best golf outings around... the StrongLand Golf Classic!!! We've **lowered the price to \$115 dollars** to accommodate corporate sponsored team play and we've raised the level of awards and prizes to make it all that much more fun and challenging. You'll note that we've brought back the fabulous **\$5000 putt**, and to serve your busy professional and personal life, **we're starting earlier**, so that we can send you home on Friday evening at a decent hour. Shotgun start begins at 10 a.m. following a continental breakfast, then "dogs at the turn" to tide you over for an early supper (Five Starr Catering) and awards program. **If members of your family would like a day in the sun around the beautiful Elk's swimming pool, we've made arrangements for them to come and swim for only \$5.00 per individual or \$10 per family.** And remember, **every player gets a complimentary future greens fee with free cart** so that you can come and play again whenever you want. Please review the enclosed flier to see how easy it will be for you to **become an event sponsor** and **gain special recognition** among the impressive field of business owners and managers who will come to play. **Think warm, think golf, think StrongLand Golf Outing, June 24th, 2011 !!!** ■

ALLE-KISKI CONNIE SOJOURN CELEBRATES 14TH YEAR ON THE RIVER ...COME FOR A ONE, TWO OR THREE DAY EVENT

Fourteen years have gone by since a small group of StrongLand Volunteers decided to promote the recreational potential of the **Kiski, Conemaugh and Allegheny Rivers**. In that time period, with the help of **watershed associations**, support from the **local newspapers** and **government cleanup dollars**, we are now served by three boat rental liveries and shuttles along the Kiski River. Last summer, over 20,000 people used these liveries and went out on the river in rented small craft.



We want **you** to consider a real adventure on the A-K Rivers, with **great food, side tours and expert water safety people** along to insure your enjoyment and safety. Please note the enclosed flier with all the details on the **2011 Alle-Kiski-Connie Rivers Sojourn**. **As low as \$30 per day** (day trippers on Saturday, only), we hope that you and your friends will come out on **May 12 – 15** to see what all the excitement is about as we create the experience of a lifetime for you. ■

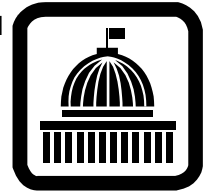
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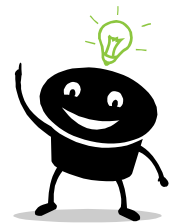
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COUNTY COMMISSIONER MEETING.... A HUGE SUCCESS!!!

This past week, a group of StrongLand leaders with your best interests in mind, visited separately with the Boards of Commissioners from **Westmoreland and Armstrong Counties**. Much was accomplished and many new channels of communications were opened as everyone involved saw how our counties function most effectively when a real dialogue is encouraged with constituents. Discussions on **unfunded state mandates, school taxes, road repairs, parks and trails, how the new governor will impact county and local programs** and more were approached. Ideas on what needs to happen to move our region forward were candidly talked about. We hope you'll be able to come along next time so we can add your support to the effort. With the way government funding of economic and community development is going, we will need your voice at any and all StrongLand Government Events scheduled to happen. **Please make every effort to attend this year's Legislative Clam Bake to be held at River Forest on the evening of Thursday, April 28th, 2011.** ■

**HIGH SCHOOL ENTREPRENEURS' PROGRAM, UP AND RUNNING**

The Winter/Spring session of the StrongLand High School Entrepreneur Program was launched last Wednesday at Penn State New Kensington with eight students from three local school districts. We began with a session to orient parents and students as to how they need to work together to begin a career in business. We're pleased with the track record of the program and how some of the students in our past classes have actually set up real businesses that make real money. Six of our past students actually had booths in our 2011 HomExpo and worked on building a client base with tremendous success. We really feel good about this program and how the Chamber is playing a role in starting up new businesses in our area.



Since this program is funded by tax credits, we hope to encourage you, our business members, to think about applying and keeping your state tax dollars in the community. The program is listed under the **Department of Community and Economic Development** currently and it's called the **Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program**. Imagine having **70% - 90%** of your state taxes remain in the area for local purposes. Right now is the perfect time to apply to be able to donate your taxes to programs like this one. Call us at 724-845-5426 if you need to know more about this wonderful opportunity to aid our local students. ■

**BUSINESS TO BUSINESS PROGRAMS TO BEGIN IN MARCH****...COMING SOON.... STRONGNET!!!**

Watch for a special mailing about StrongNet Programs which will be beginning in the next few months. These programs will provide member businesses with an opportunity to network with one another, make contacts and close sales. ■

Leadership**LAKV LOOKS FOR NEW CLASS MEMBERS FOR 2011-2012**

Leadership Alle-Kiski Valley, an acclaimed adult leadership program, is now looking for its **2011-2012 class members**. This year's class of 14, has passed the half-way mark on its calendar and will finish up in May, so we are hoping that you will follow their example and send someone from your business or organization to take part in the **20th Anniversary Class**, which will begin in September. Members of the class learn so much in the way of leadership skills while they gain so many new networking friends and acquaintances. **The word "success" is "key" to the LAKV planners** as they develop each year's new program. They also make sure that the Leadership Students are networking with all of the successful leaders in the community. **For more information about this outstanding program you can go to their website at www.lakv.org to see their dynamic and successful program.**

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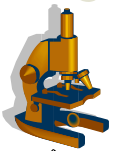
INNOVATION FAIR IS BEING PLANNED FOR 7TH GRADERS

The **StrongLand Chamber of Commerce** will be partnering with the **Allegheny Valley Chamber and Penn State New Kensington** to present a two part innovation, invention program for local school students. The first part of this program, to take place in early October, will be aimed at clarifying the process of inventing marketable items, how to protect those ideas and move them forward into production. The second part of the program will deal with showcasing original inventions at the Invention Convention to be held at PSNK in November. Major prizes will be presented to those with the most dynamic ideas. Students interested in such a program should contact the Allegheny Valley or StrongLand Chambers of Commerce for criteria and application information. ■


**STRONGLAND 'STEPS UP' TO HELP STUDENTS WITH S.T.E.M. CAREERS
 ...FUNDING PROVIDED IN PART FROM ALCOA GRANT**

The **StrongLand Chamber of Commerce** will be partnering with **WEDIG** to deliver a career development program focusing on careers in **Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)**. The program being presented by Westmoreland Economic Development Initiative Group (WEDIG) will be housed at **Penn State New Kensington** involving students from **Burrell, New Kensington/Arnold and the Kiski Area School Districts**. The role that StrongLand will fulfill will be one of advice and assistance along with funding for specific parts of the program.

Students from our local school districts will have the opportunity to learn, first hand, about career paths in local industries that require math and science backgrounds. Technology specialists from the **Electro-Optics Center, Alcoa Technology Center** and other technological industries will be present to provide discussion and mentoring on the high-tech jobs that exist in our region. The goal of the program is to give local students guidance in choosing a career path in these fields which will keep our brightest students within our local workforce. **Anyone interested in more information about this program is encouraged to contact the StrongLand Chamber of Commerce at 724.845.5426.** ■


**YOUR 2011 STRONGLAND WINDOW DECALS AND
 ANNUAL PLAQUE DATE STICKERS ARE ENCLOSED FOR YOU TO DISPLAY**

Don't be shy; be proud of your membership in one of the best Chambers of Commerce in Western Pennsylvania. We've enclosed your 2011 Window Decals and year up-date stickers for you to display at your place of business. We hope that others may see these and you will help us to recruit new members to help support the pro-business agenda of the StrongLand Chamber of Commerce.

Members With Something To Say

- **ARMSTRONG COUNTY TOURIST BUREAU LOBBIES...
... TO KEEP THE ALLEGHENY RIVER LOCKS OPEN**

Everyone that loves our local rivers must show their concern now to keep our rivers open to commerce and recreation by actively telling **federal elected official** and the **Army Corps of Engineers** about our region's high priority to restore funding in the 2012 budget to keep our locks and dams maintained and operational. Plans exist, right now, to cut federal funding in 2012 and close locks 5 – 9 creating a series of unconnected river lakes on the Allegheny from Freeport to East Brady. This would all but close the Allegheny River to long distance transportation. **Just think of the impact to tourism and commerce and how this move to save dollars will actually cost our local economy more money in the long run.** Once the locks are taken out of commission, their purpose to provide transportation and connectivity will be gone forever, never to return. When the locks are closed it will only be a matter of time until certain environmental groups will call for the removal of the dams, all together, even further limiting river use and tourism. We **must** contact our US Congressmen and Senators, along with the Army Corps before decisions are reached in March about this cut back. You can contact the US Army Corps of Engineers at celrp-pa@usace.army.mil or call **412-395-7500** to let them know how you feel about the proposed changes. All communications must be made under the subject heading of: **Allegheny River Locks**. They must be informed about the negative impact of this decision to the local economy, both from a commerce and tourism aspect. Written mail correspondence can be sent to: **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, 1000 Liberty Avenue, 22nd Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.**

- **COMMUNITY FOUNDATION HOLDS UNIQUE FUND DRIVE**

The **Armstrong County Community Foundation** is organizing the first **Armstrong Day of Giving**, to be held on **May 12, 2011**. The **Foundation's Challenge Fund** will match any donations made on that day. Right now through **March 31st, 2011**, they're trying to build the **Foundation's Challenge Fund** by asking **you** for donations. The Foundation is starting with a \$15,000 allocation from its general fund to the Challenge Fund as a way to encourage **you** to give. On May 12th 2011, the **Armstrong Day of Giving**, we're hoping that you will make a substantial contribution to your favorite organization or agency. Your contribution will be matched, to the highest extent possible, from the Challenge Fund by the Armstrong Community Foundation. This is a great way for local companies to give back to their community, make their tax-deductible donation go further and receive plenty of publicity for it, if so desired. For more information please contact www.armstronggives.org or contact **Jessica Coil** at **724-548-1261** or go to jessica@accfound.org.

- **K. A. E. F. HOLDS "WELCOME SPRING" GALA AND AUCTION**

The **Kiski Area Education Foundation (KAEF)** will hold a grand party to celebrate its recent success in building a fund to help area educational programs for the **Kiski Area School District**. The **"Welcome Spring" Gala and Auction** will take place at the elegant **Hill Crest Country Club** on **Saturday, April 9, 2011**, beginning with a 6 p.m. reception followed by gourmet dinner with entertainment at 7 p.m. The professional entertainment will be provided by **Stephen Heffner's First Class Productions**. For more information about this event or to make a reservation you can contact, Executive Director, Marlene Petro at **724-727-3426**. The cost for the event is \$75.00 and all proceeds will benefit the students of the Kiski Area School District. Auction items will be provided by the many supporting area businesses. ***The KAEF was formed to enhance the educational, cultural and recreational experiences of the Kiski Area Students.***

- **IUP AT NORTHPOINTE OFFERS MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

It's about to become a part of the **IUP/Northpointe** curriculum! IUP at Northpointe will begin offering a **Master's in Business Administration, Executive Track**, starting next January, 2012. The program will be offered as a "hybrid" program; meaning that for each course 50% will be online and 50% will be face to face. This allows working adults the opportunity to meet for class one night per week and still be able to graduate in 2 years. The MBA, Executive Track must have a bachelor's degree in any field and 4 plus years of work experience. An information session is planned for 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 29th, 2011. Learn more about this great program by going to www.iup.edu/northpointe/executiveMBA, **they will be more than happy to assist you.**

- **LAST CALL FOR... "FLAG-A-RAMA"**

Want an exciting chance to support a valuable community effort while you could possibly **win \$5,000** the same evening. Then think about **FLAG-A-RAMA**, sponsored by FLAG (**Freeport, Leechburg, and Apollo Group**), the Main Street Program designed to revitalize our local downtowns on March 19, 2011. Doors open at 5 p.m. with the grand prize given away at 7 p.m. Sponsors are needed along with participants wishing to support the effort by attending. Cost is \$75 per person or \$140 per couple. Seating at **Lingrow Farm** is limited so call today to see if you can still register to come. To register please call **724-719-9700**, today!

Members With Something To Say

- **ROARING RUN TO OFFER EARTH DAY DASH**

To celebrate its more than 25 years of existence, the **Roaring Run Watershed Association** will hold its Earth Day Dash on Saturday, April 23, 2011. Not only is everyone invited to take part in this milestone event, but you may also want to become an event sponsor. Depending on the level of sponsorship you desire (\$100 - \$500), the Roaring Run Watershed Association will utilize the money to help extend and maintain the trail. For more information you can call them at **412-298-2039**.

- **ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES OFFERED AT PENN STATE NEW KEN:**

...**HOW TO START A GOOD INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

...**HOW TO STRETCH YOUR ENERGY DOLLARS**

Pat Hollinger would like to know if your organization or company would like to find out all there is to know about saving dollars on energy usage and how to become more cost efficient by **Setting Up an Energy Savings Program for your Company**. It's easy to talk a good story, but until you're tried implementing some energy conservation measures it's all only "smoke-'n- mirrors." Help make your "**fixed costs**" lower with some very important, yet minor changes. Find out what you can do to make a big difference in your monthly bills by coming to this **March 29, 2011** program. It will be held in the Conference Center at **PSNK** at 8:00 a.m., following breakfast and registration. Also, you may want to test your knowledge of **Creating a Successful Internship Program** that may actually save your company dollars. Sign up for this **March 22nd** program which will begin at 8 p.m., following a 7:30 a.m. breakfast. Both programs are only **\$10 each** and well worth the money and effort. To register you can also call Pat at **724-334-6053**.

It's no secret that the entire Penn State New Kensington spring class schedule is now available. All you have to do is go to their website at www.nk.psu.edu. and look for the spring schedule.

- **CONGRATULATIONS VANDERGRIFT FOR "I AM NUMBER 4" FILMING**

Recently I had the chance to view the hottest new movie out of Hollywood, titled "**I AM Number 4**" and I must say that I was impressed by the feature and how it showcased Paradise, Ohio, starring **Vandergrift, Pennsylvania**. The street scenes in Vandergrift should make those who see the film want to travel to see the town. I imagine that the sequel may return to the community due to Number 4's female love interest who will be waiting patiently in Vandergrift, I mean "**Paradise**," for his return. I'm sure that the turn of the century, landscape architect firm of **Frederick Law Omstead** and town's founder **George McMurtry** had this movie by Steven Spielberg in mind when Vandergrift was conceived 116 years ago!!!

- **NEW DEPARTMENT STORE OPENS IN LOWER BURRELL MARCH 31**

Roses Department Stores have announced plans to open its newest store in Lower Burrell at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 31, 2011 in the Hill Crest Shopping Center. The StrongLand Chamber of Commerce is participating in the grand opening by assisting with the ribbon cutting ceremony. **Invited dignitaries will take part in the ceremony and hope the community will turn out to support this opening. There will be snacks and valuable prizes at this opening and we hope you and other local business leaders will all take a few moments to attend.** Over one hundred people will be employed by this new venture and we congratulate Lower Burrell and its Leadership along with J.J. Gumberg for interesting this National Retailer in coming to our community. Let us all make every effort to support the newest store in our region who is a proud new member of the StrongLand Chamber of Commerce.

- **WEST HAVEN OPENS MEMORY LANE... TO BENEFIT VICTIMS OF ALZHEIMERS**

Administrators at **West Haven Manor** near Apollo plan to open "**Memory Lane**" a new idea in Personal Care specifically designed for people with memory impairment, including Alzheimer's and dementia. This will feature specially trained Staff Members who will provide around-the-clock care and assistance for patients with their medication, meals and daily hygiene. Memory Lane residents will enjoy the "**Freedom to Live**" in a safe secure and caring environment. This is the first of its kind care in the area, according to Executive Director, **Ken Tack**. Patients are protected yet, with proper supervision, can take an accessible bus to local restaurants, shops and other community spots. For more information about this much needed service, you can call West Haven at **724-727-3102** or go to the website at:

www.WestHavenManorofApollo.com