

WAYNE TOMORROW!

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Wayne Tomorrow! A county-sponsored, community-based collaboration focused on the projects, resources and infrastructure needed to move Wayne County, its people, its culture and its economy into a vibrant future.

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Stourbridge Solar Marks Big Year for Clean Energy Co-op

The 83 extra-large solar panels being installed on the roof of The Stourbridge Project at the Wayne County Park Street Complex represent a local investment project nearly two years in the making.



Back in early 2019, the Clean Energy Co-op Inc. (Co-op) and the Wayne County Commissioners began discussing a solar photovoltaic array on the former 1928 school building, now home to the county's technology incubator and co-working space.

The \$64,000 project, which would be owned and operated by the Co-op, was to be funded, in part, by a federal grant; but by the spring of 2020, then Co-op President Jack Barnett said it became clear that the project was unlikely to receive that grant, leaving a funding gap.

By August, Barnett said the Co-op found another financing vehicle, one sometimes used in real estate and energy industries, which monetizes federal business tax incentives. "We have created a new Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) that will be majority owned and managed by the Co-op. This subsidiary — Stourbridge Solar Project LLC — will construct, own and operate the new array. "

The County has already signed a 25-year power purchase agreement, and the solar array will generate about one-third of the building's electricity needs — equivalent to about four private homes annually.

To bridge the gap, the LLC also has a local business owner who is investing \$15,000 for a 24% share in the LLC and, in return, will get most of the federal tax incentives and depreciation benefits from the project. Buselli Solutions of Beach Lake started the solar installation in early November and expects the array to be complete and operating by early December.

Overall, 2020 has been a big year for the Clean Energy Co-op, which won the Wayne Economic Development Corporation's *Innovator of the Year Award* at a virtual ceremony in late November. Since its inception six years ago, the Co-op has leveraged \$290,000 of investment, including \$43,000 from grants, to complete four local solar projects so far.

The slow-money model is catching on, too. Barnett, who now leads the Co-op's Project Development, said they were recently approached by a group near Philadelphia interested in emulating the membership-based community investment model. After receiving all the information, the group instead suggested joining the existing Co-op and creating a southeast PA chapter to undertake similar projects there.

The Co-op members and Board also liked this idea, and plans are now in development to create a chapter-based organization that can be expanded across the state.

Joining the Clean Energy Co-op involves a one-time \$100 fee that buys one membership share. "I call it putting your wallet to work," said Barnett. The funds are used to finance local community sustainable energy projects with modest returns over the long term for members that choose to further invest. [Details are available on their website.](#)

County, Health Care Partners Celebrate Rural Health Day



The Wayne County Commissioners and Wayne Tomorrow! along with Wayne Memorial Hospital and The Wright Center celebrated National Rural Health Day on Nov. 19.

They joined the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) in showcasing rural America, increasing awareness of rural health-related challenges and promoting efforts to address those challenges. In Pennsylvania, the Office of Rural Health provides significant assistance to the PA Department of Health on the implementation of the Rural Health Model.

This innovative model focuses on rural health care transformation, in conjunction with hospital global budgets to increase rural Pennsylvanians' access to high-quality care, improve health and reduce the growth of hospital expenses. The model is the first of its kind in the nation, and Wayne Memorial is among the first to pilot the program

The Wright Center for Community Health, which recently opened a practice in Hawley at 103 Spruce Street, offers primary and urgent care, screenings, behavioral health and substance use disorder services, among others.

CEO Dr. Linda Thomas-Hemak said The Wright Center was glad to step in to provide Medication Assisted Treatment for the Wayne County Drug & Alcohol Commission after the physician running that program passed away suddenly.

She also thanked Wayne Memorial officials for their help in achieving their designation as a look-alike federal community health care center, which opened up a significant amount of resources toward their efforts in the community.

For its part, the Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers continue to grow and expand with practitioners joining the ranks at its eight primary care centers along with pediatric, dental, behavioral health and Women's Health Care practices. The Wayne Memorial umbrella also encompasses, general surgery, pulmonary and sleep medicine, cardiology and neurology.



PIVOT & PROSPER

French Manor Inn & Spa Puts the Luxury in Social Distancing



Genevieve Reese of The French Manor Inn and Spa in South Sterling had an inkling something was going on when the cancellations started. Then in March, COVID-19 shut the doors.

At first, Reese said she expected to put the time to good use cleaning, etc. "For the first six weeks, we were just answering our phone, so people didn't think we were closed. We kept in touch with email and Facebook. Instead of getting ready for the warm weather, the refunds were flying out. It was frightening."

But doing business in Wayne County would be a distinct advantage in the coming months. First, Reese said the ability to reach out to their local banker helped her and her team to concentrate on finding a route forward. "Our new buzzword was fluid," she said, as her dedicated core staff re-

turned with the help of the Payroll Protection Program.

As the country and the economy began to loosen up in late spring, Reese said they decided to offer a Mother's Day dinner to benefit the Wayne County Emergency Food Relief Program and served more meals than usual. "That felt good," she said. Reese also found the time to help with food distributions in Newfoundland for both the Wayne County Emergency Food Relief Program and the Salvation Army.

Then as summer approached and people started looking for safe ways to get away, The French Manor became an obvious choice. "We invented social distancing," Reese said of the sprawling AAA Four-Diamond property. While the Inn always featured a certain level of solitude, the management team imposed their own restrictions on room occupancy and dining room capacity.

Reese said they also just completed a major Wi-fi upgrade at the facility, which helped attract folks who were "working from home" but wanted a 20-mile view. As the guests posted their experiences on social media and glowed about how safe they felt, the bookings grew.

Why not? The French Manor is also within 15 minutes of three State Parks and Lake Wallenpaupack, perfect places to use all those bicycles and kayaks people were buying.

Reese said the property had a banner summer and fall season. "It was like a Saturday night from July to November," she explained. Since the resort does not allow children, the upcoming family-oriented holidays are among the slower ones on The French Manor's calendar. However, they are still offering Gourmet Dinner Baskets, hosting small groups and couples, and planning interesting in-room dining options.

It's a similar situation for Christmas, when they usually host a Christmas Eve dinner and overnight guests before closing on Christmas Day. This year, Reese said they are closing on Dec. 23 to allow their hard working staff a little more time with their families.

New Year's Eve will, of course, be different this time around. Reese said the dressy, eight-course meal is still on, but state restaurant restrictions mean desserts and a gift basket complete with holiday noisemakers to finish off the night in your room.

Reese emphasizes the importance of relationship building and looking for the silver lining.

"Don't go into panic mode. There's always opportunity." She said listening to even small suggestions and remaining transparent and in-touch with you customers will help.

She also credits her staff. "At times like that, you find strengths in your employees that you didn't know about."

Wayne County Collaborates to Bring Farmers-to-Families

Wayne County, The Cooperage Project, the County Office of Human Services, and Wayne Tomorrow! came together to host the USDA Farmers to Families program and distribute 800 free meals to local residents.



During the drive-through event Oct. 27 at the Wayne County Fairgrounds, each household received a box of frozen meat, a box of dairy, a box of produce and a gallon of milk.



Under the program, The US Department of Agriculture partnered with regional and local distributors, whose workforce had been significantly

impacted by the closure of restaurants, hotels and other food service entities, to purchase fresh foods.

The USDA Agriculture Marketing Service purchased the fresh fruits and vegetables and a variety of dairy and meat products, while participating distributors and wholesalers packaged the pre-approved boxes for delivery to food banks, community faith-based organizations and other non-profit groups serving Americans in need.

Then in early November, The Cooperage and Camp IHC teamed up to prepare, package and freeze 75 meals for seniors to take home and enjoy on Thanksgiving. Willow Wisp Organic Farm donated all the organic produce and White Stag Farms donated the bacon.

The Cooperage Project also locally sourced nearly everything: turkeys from Quails R Us, dinner rolls from Beach Lake Bakery and desserts baked from scratch from Be Kind Bake House. The "ready to heat" meals were put together with the help of volunteers from Yoga International and made available via delivery or pick up at The Cooperage, 1030 Main Street in Honesdale.



**A Year-End Message from
Wayne Tomorrow!**
Community Network Specialist
Kim Rickard

Please allow me to extend my genuine appreciation to our County Commissioners, every collaborator, partner, individual and organization who has been involved with the Wayne Tomorrow! initiative.

2020 was my first full year as the Community Network Specialist, and it has been quite a year! Though we faced many uncertainties through this past year we were able to navigate our way through, thanks to the unwavering dedication of this community of Wayne County PA.

In collaboration with many organizations, we fed hundreds of residents through multiple emergency food efforts; we kept people who lacked internet connected with help from our County Libraries; we had "makers" produce elements of PPE for front-line healthcare workers. The list could go on. Please check out our [archived newsletters](#) to see more stories of collaboration and good will. My hope for you all is peace and joy during this holiday season and you can find ways to celebrate with your family.

As we look to a new year, 2021 will bring more uncertainty. But we know with the collaboration and caring of our Wayne Tomorrow! initiative we will continue to prosper, together. Thank you and Happy Holidays to all!

www.WayneTomorrow.com