

# CLEARLY AHEAD TIMES

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## CLEARFIELD COUNTY PROMOTES OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Clearly Ahead has increased its marketing efforts to bring new industry to the area using cutting edge media formats and strategies within the economic development arena.

According to Mr. Swales, Clearly Ahead is a small operation but it prioritizes personal outreach to local companies and a vastly different marketing strategy to appeal to out of area prospects. We use market analysis and research to determine which industries to focus on and what resources specific industry sets need to make our area unique and competitive. The idea is to target specific markets that are a fit for what Clearfield County has to offer instead of just blindly approaching industries. Mr. Swales stated "Clearly Ahead is mirroring what major metropolitan areas do with their marketing and recruitment strategies."

For example, the Commerce Park located near Interstate 80 was evaluated to see if it was suitable for the food industry. A thorough analysis was done on both the site and the region to see if there was a matching suitable workforce and infrastructure amenities. Two years ago, it was approved as a certified site for food or beverage manufacturing business sectors. Since then Clearly Ahead has attended trade shows and special events where Clearly Ahead representatives can physically see and talk to potential businesses. Mr. Swales stated Clearly Ahead is getting this area in front of food and beverage manufacturers as well as to other industries identified in our market research. Having a certified site reduces the risk of site selection for prospects and decreases the time needed to get a plant operating.

Mr. Swales stated one thing often overlooked in industrial development is "speed to market" which is the shortest amount of time taken to get a plant up and running. Having a site ready with the necessary certifications and connections, cuts through the time the manufacturer needs to get up and running. The more done in advance for the company, the easier it is for the company to determine if a site is right for them.

Mr. Swales stated Clearly Ahead is the only place in PA to have a certified site and this gives us an advantage. Certified programs are used heavily in the south, so Clearly Ahead took this approach to create a strength to differentiate Clearfield County from the rest of Pennsylvania markets.



## JOBS AND SKILLED WORKERS GAP

The gap between jobs and skilled technical workers has been getting bigger over the years, and some local leaders are planning to change that.



Mr. Fred Redden, Executive Director of the Clearfield County Career and Technology Center (CCCTC) said the push in the last several years has been for graduating students to go on to a four year college, leading to a shortage of trades people. The challenge is to change the mind-set that college is necessary to get a good paying job. Mr. Redden also said there are some other programs at the school where the students are employed immediately following the completion of their studies including machinists and truck drivers. Mr. Redden stated the blue collar population of the area is almost gone, while the industry and factory jobs are making a comeback to Clearfield County. Mr. Redden stated "We need to entice the top third of students to enter the trade force" and creating a school to industry partnership is key with a goal of providing high paying jobs. Mr. Redden is working with local industries to ensure that the CCCTC is providing the right training for jobs right here in Clearfield County with the collaboration of Workforce Solutions of North Central PA and Clearly Ahead Development.

Mr. Swales stated the CCCTC has added a new heating and refrigeration class to supply trained workers for TAFCO which is expanding with a new plant in the Industrial Park that will supply 40 to 100 new jobs. Mr. Swales also said that local industry is already investing in their future employees by giving the CCCTC discounts on various machines so they can then train students to operate them.

Mr. Redden said "The CCCTC has a group of people who want to focus on these partnerships," and the adult education programs are also having a high rate of employment. After completing a four-week \$4,500 course, most of the graduates of the truck driving program can "walk right into jobs", and companies are asking the CCCTC to "send us everyone you have."

Mr. Swales said "there is a need and opportunity for private sector companies to partner with educational and training institutions. Local companies can utilize various state and federal programs to assist internship and apprenticeship opportunities to help grow their business." Any businesses interested in learning more about job training programs, internship and apprenticeship opportunities are encouraged to contact Clearly Ahead Development at 768-7838.

## PENN PALLET GROWS LOCALLY WITH NEW EQUIPMENT

When Penn Pallet needed funding for a new grinder at their Woodland facility, they called Clearfield County Industrial Development Authority (CCIDA) for help.



Mr. McCloskey was able to not only assist them with getting a loan through the CCIDA, but he also helped secure the remainder of the funding needed through the North Central Regional Planning & Development Commission (North Central).

George Werner, Controller at Penn Pallet explained how Mr. McCloskey "set us up" with the CCIDA loan and then helped with the North Central funding. McCloskey sharing the information about the project with North Central helped Penn Pallet receive the loan more quickly. Mr. Werner stated Penn Pallet needed \$84,000 for the down payment on the new grinder the loan application was pushed through in time to have that payment ready. Mr. McCloskey stated the new grinder will be used to grind up scrap pallets with the resulting product being sold to local businesses, hospitals, and schools where most of it is used as a source of heat.

Mr. McCloskey stated Penn Pallet received \$120,000 from each the CCIDA and North Central. These loans carried a lower than average interest rate. Mr. McCloskey stated the CCIDA often works with other local & regional economic development agencies to assist companies when the funding needs are higher than what the CCIDA can lend on our own and this was the case with Penn Pallet's recent project.

Mr. McCloskey stated providing a single point of contact to access a variety of low-interest business financing options is an advantage the CCIDA offers to all the businesses in Clearfield County.

Mr. McCloskey stated Penn Pallet, is based in St. Marys, and was started in 1976 by the Cunningham family. They provide pallets and other products to industries in both the USA and Canada. In 2004 they expanded with a new site in Woodland that specializes in recycling old pallets. Reclaimed pallets are repaired, broken boards replaced, when necessary, and all pallets are cleaned to restore them to like-new condition before being released to the customer, according to information on pennpallet.com. Mr. McCloskey stated the company has been "a leader in wood pallets and pallet management in the Northeast for over 41 years." Mr. McCloskey stated Penn Pallet is concerned about its impact on the environment. They recycle 100% of their wood waste using it for heating, landscaping mulch, pressed wood and pet bedding. Mr. McCloskey stated between their two locations, Penn Pallet has sold over 11,000 tons of ground pallets and sawdust in 2009. Mr. McCloskey stated currently the Woodland site employs 30 people but there are plans to expand. Production has increased from 20,000 pallets per week to 25,000 each week.