Community Involvement



Senior Offices Groundbreaking

Berniece attended the ribbon cutting for the Berkeley Senior Services in October. Minghini's built-out the space in the basement of their Martinsburg building for administrative offices.

Ba HumBug!

As the holidays approach, we would like to encourage our colleagues and friends to think of the less fortunate. One way to help is to ask family and friends to make a donation in your name to a favorite charity (of your choice) instead of giving more gadgets, trinkets or toys that most of us already have too many of in our abundant society. With TV shows cropping up on how to organize your mounds of "stuff" and books being published on how to live the "simple" life focused on values rather than possessions, this might just solve your problems and the community's. We're trying to do this at the Collis household.





Girl Scouts!

Berniece (L) served as the project manager for the United Way Day of Caring Project for the Girl Scouts. The project included painting the storage area of the pavilion, which was built in for last year's Day of Caring by Minghini's. Pictured is Don Nisewarner painting the back of the storage area at the pavilion.

Thanks!

Thanks to the following subcontractors and suppliers who contributed to the Shawnee Girl Scout Council Every Girl Everywhere Campaign:

Fridinger-Ritchie Company, Inc.
Pennington's Masonry
Dr. & Mrs. Donald Patthoff
Willetts Systems, Inc.
Union Sales Dodge
J&W Mechanical Services, Inc.
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Valentine

LDH Electrical Contractors, Inc.
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CoxHollida, Inc. (Fred Hollida)
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R.M. Roach and Sons, Inc.

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FALL 2004

CONSTRUCTION NEWS & INFORMATION FROM MINGHINI'S GENERAL CONTRACTORS, INC.

EASTERN PANHANDLE CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT NEWS

G-R-O-W-T-H Malignant or Benign?

The Eastern Panhandle has the fastest population growth, strongest job market, and less than state and national averages for manufacturing job loss. The real estate market is hot with the number of licensed real estate agents increasing by 20-30 percent in the last year, according to Paula Miller, president of the Eastern Panhandle Board of Realtors. Orchards are turning into subdivisions, businesses are springing up overnight, the roads are clogged with traffic, sewer extension and water quality are problematic, and life is becoming more like the "burbs" every day. On the bright side, the WVU Hospital is partnering with City Hospital and Memorial Hospital in Jefferson County to provide a consortium and will bring in resident physicians from WVU for training.

In terms of quality of life rankings, in a recent ranking of counties in and around the region by American City Business Journals that considers 20 key variables – from stability of residences and work in the neighborhood to property taxes and educational attainment – Berkeley County received a 6.0 ranking (56.62% ranking on the national percentile) as compared to Jefferson County with a 5.23, and Morgan County with a -3.27. A full report is available in the September issue of the *Quad State Business Journal*. Berkeley County's lowest areas were for neighborhood work availability, length of commute, availability of public transit, percent of top level jobs (only 26% in management/ professional occupations) and educational attainment (15% are college graduates and only 6% have graduate degrees). But on the bright side 74% of the population own their homes and the tax rate is among the lowest in the region.

So the question is whether this growth is a malignant tumor or a benign blessing? It's a matter each individual has definite opinions on depending on his or her personal priorities and economic situation. To consider the big picture, we've compiled some additional information and facts inside.

PROJECT GALLERY



MARC LAYOVER FACILITY, Martinsburg



GROUD BREAKING BB&T, EDWIN MILLER BLVD., Martinsburg

New and Completed Projects . . . Citizens National Bank, Spring Mills • Widmeyer Elementary School, Berkeley Springs
Priestfield Pastoral Retreat and Conference Center, Jefferson County • The Dunn Building, Martinsburg
The Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library

Growth Facts:

- Berkeley County's Population is growing more rapidly than any other jurisdiction's in the Quad-State region – an incredible 4.8% from July 2002 – 2003. (July 1, 2003 population estimate is 85,272.)
- Home sales in Berkeley County led the Eastern Panhandle in the first quarter of 2004 with a 37.2% increase over the same period of 2003 and the average sale price of $143,651, a 1.7 decrease over the previous year.
- Single family building permits (1,317 permits) grew by 27.8% in Berkeley County between 2002 and 2003, as compared to 42.2% in Jefferson County and 46.3% in Morgan County.
- Panhandle job growth has remained stronger than any other part of WV with jobs increasing by 3% from the end of the recession in 2001 while jobs in the state declined by 1.2% for the same period and 1.4% for the national economy.
- Construction jobs in the Eastern Panhandle are the fastest growing job segment up 48.9% between 2000 and 2003 (source: WV Department of Labor). The closest other growth sectors were Professional Business Services and Education/Health Services, both of which grew 14.3% and 14.4%, respectively, during the same period.
- Berkeley County Schools' enrollment has increased 40% in the past decade to approximately 15,000 students. This year the system had to hire 152 new teachers and more will be required.
- WV has 26 miles of I-81 and is widening parts of it to 6 lanes mostly around Martinsburg exits.

All in all, there are many pros and cons to this kind of growth; however, when one considers many areas in the rest of the state, where there is a feeling of hopelessness due to population out-migration (especially among youth), high unemployment, very few high-paying jobs, and high school drop-out rates, then the Eastern Panhandle's growth issues might seem like enviable issues. It's a matter of vision and leadership to preserve our area's quality of life, while allowing us to enjoy the benefits of a growing economy. With elections just around the corner, each of us can be represented through the people we elect and by continuing to make them aware of our priorities.

A community is like an escalator, it can go up or it can go down, but it can't stand still. No one would ever characterize our community as standing still! ■

Subcontractor Profile

Daniel Gantt, V.P. Operations
Gantt's Excavating
2754 Tabler Station Road
304/ 229-6515
ganttsexca@adelphia.net



Gantt's excavating is a full-service, turnkey excavating company that was started by Frederick D. Gantt 32 years ago in Martinsburg. Today the company is incorporated and operates as a family business by Fred's two sons and daughter. Daniel is VP of operations, Eric is VP Engineering and sister Janessa serves as the corporate secretary. Diana, Fred's wife is a VP, while Fred still holds the title of President. The company has just about every kind of earth moving equipment from big dozers to small tractors as well as loaders, graders and dump trucks. It works on all types of commercial, residential and utility jobs from site grading and moving dirt to small septic systems. Gantt's is currently working with Minghini's on the BB&T project in Martinsburg on Edwin Miller Blvd. across from the Comfort Inn.

States Daniel, "Minghini's is a real pleasure to work with … everything is going smoothly and we have a good working relationship." ■

Supplier

Barry Littleton, Branch Manager
Houston- Starr Company
9912-C Governor Lane Blvd.
Williamsport, MD 21795
301/223-4560

Founded in 1894 in Pittsburgh, Houston-Starr Company supplies hollow metal doors, frames, wood doors and finished hardware to contractors. There is also an appliance, cabinetry and residential doors division. Barry supplies local contractors with commercial grade supplies. The Williamsport office has been there for five years and serves about a 50-mile radius. Another branch office in Altoona services most of Pennsylvania. Barry is working with Minghini's on the BB&T Bank job in Martinsburg. He notes, "Our communications with Minghini's are great and I look forward to working with them in the future." ■

Editor's Insights



Berniece Collis
Vice President

As a rule I try to stay positive in my outlook and show good leadership within the business community. I've served on many local, civic, school and business associations' boards – from the School Board to the Chamber, as well as arts and special focus groups like the Girl Scouts. But business people have to face alarming facts and not sugar-coat the truth. West Virginia has some major problems it needs to resolve as a state – such as Worker's Compensation and Taxation – if it wants to be pro-business and attract new industry … not to mention retain its current businesses' WV chambers.

A major focus of the annual meeting presentations dealt with the crisis in state taxation, titled "State Facing 'Perfect Storm.'" Presenters Mark Muchow of the State Tax Department and Dr. Tom Witt, of the WVU Bureau of Business and Economic Research made the key points that WV's tax structure is maxed out, is one of the most centralized in the nation, and provides very little flexibility and few options to respond to anticipated funding needs (like from growth impacts in the Eastern Panhandle). They noted that compounding this situation are various other issues that could position WV in the path of "The Perfect Storm," such as:

- The projected annual growth in state expenditures (without factoring any raises) will increase twice as fast as projected annual growth in revenues between now and 2010;
- The state's demographics (aging population and lower income families) are placing a greater strain on government services (than other states);
- WV's business taxes already are at the high end of the range, when compared to other states, and the erosion in the state's business climate is eroding business taxes;
- Medicaid's average annual costs will be growing 7 percent to 11 percent, which will outpace any growth in the state's revenues;
- The state's budget provides little flexibility for implementing significant cost reductions, since the vast portion (77 percent) of the state's spending (outside of public education) goes to four key areas:

  1. Higher Education 43 percent
  2. Public Safety and Corrections – 16 percent
  3. Health and Human Services – 12 percent
  4. Judicial – 6 percent

Muchow made the point that the state's low per capita income, slow economic activity, and low property taxes are constraining the administration's ability to fund services throughout West Virginia, especially in light of the states old/poor demographic profile.

So if the current tax system is unbalanced and WV 's tax capacity is tapped out, as Dr. Witt noted, what are we doing about it besides pointing out the obvious? Are we going to raise property taxes, enact more local powers acts so we can tax developers, or add more tax burdens on businesses and make WV even more unfriendly?

It seems to me that we'd better look at the big picture: Effective economic development policies and practices would bring in more clean industries, younger workers could stay in the state (thereby shifting our population age downward). An increased tax base (on per capital income and industry) might be a partial solution. But if the state thinks that adding taxes to businesses is the answer, these problems are going to be compounded because businesses cannot pay more punitive taxes. They'll simply move to adjoining states where the business climate is more conducive. To my way of thinking, every business owner needs to get involved and support associations that are out there lobbying and educating people to the value of a strong economy. ■

Staff News

Congratulations to John Kneisly and his family. Their new home Is an example of John's craftmanship.







Minghini Sponsored Cody Lemaster in the Annual Narwalk Soapbox Derby.

Vroom Vroom!