

Support for Small Businesses



By DCED - On November 5, DCED announced a \$21 million investment to create 11 new Business Assistance Service Centers through the Historically Disadvantaged Business Assistance Program. These centers will expand access to technical assistance for historically disadvantaged businesses, including one-on-one counseling, accounting support, employer responsibility training, and additional resources. Each center will also hire bilingual staff and offer translation services to ensure services are accessible to all.

The recently signed 2025-2026 state budget includes an additional \$20 million to expand support for minority-owned businesses under the Historically Disadvantaged Business Assistance Program, along with \$20 million for the Main Street Matters Program to strengthen small businesses and commercial corridors in communities across the Commonwealth.



Epic Events & Economic Impact

Tourism continues to be a key economic driver. This summer, the United States Golf Association (USGA)'s 2025 U.S. Open golf championship in Allegheny County, generated an estimated \$288.8 million in economic impact.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a landmark year as Pennsylvania hosts a series of world-class events in celebration of America's 250th anniversary. In addition to semiquincentennial events throughout the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania will welcome NCAA's March Madness, the FIFA World Cup, the MLB All-Star Game, and the 2026 NFL Draft. Millions of visitors are expected, and Governor Shapiro's new budget invests \$50 million to ensure Pennsylvania is prepared to host these high-impact events successfully and safely.

2025 WM RECYCLING REPORT: CLOSING THE "SAY-DO GAP"



AMERICANS FEEL GOOD ABOUT RECYCLING, AND COMPANY RECYCLING COMMITMENTS HELP GUIDE THEIR PURCHASES — EVEN AS EVERYDAY BARRIERS CAN LIMIT RECYCLING FOLLOW THROUGH.



Building Connections on the D&L Trail

By Daniel DiBella

LEHIGH VALLEY - There's something about walking and talking that strengthens relationships and builds connections. When someone says, "We should get together," the default is often a bar or restaurant. Or maybe your kids are restless and you're thinking, "Get out of the house!" but where? Walking and talking on the D&L Trail is the perfect answer to both situations.

Last winter I attended a virtual "Connector's Summit" hosted by Chad Littlefield. During that internationally attended Summit, I "met" a person from Orefield. When we realized we were in each other's backyard, we committed to a future in-person meeting...and that finally happened this fall. We met at Saylor Park in Coplay and walked for an hour on the Ironton Rail Trail.

It was such a lovely way to get to know another person. Unintimidating. Comfortable. Great bonus to get off our work screens and get some steps in and fresh air. That trail will be connected to the D&L in the near future. The possibilities of trail time in that area are many, with more on the horizon.

I regularly walk with a best friend, and we very much enjoyed a section of the trail south of Race Street in Catasauqua. Again, we're excited for the continued improvements and CONNECTIONS that are coming in that area.

Different Ways to Make Connections on the D&L Trail

I have led conversation "walk and talks" with women from church on sections of the Bethlehem Heritage Paths. These are interesting side tours from the D&L Trail near Sand Island in Bethlehem.

When kids are home or cousins are in town we often get outside for a walk. We did the spur route in Slatington over winter break. My husband and I had first become acquainted with that trail when walking the D&L Heritage Half-Marathon several years ago. It's a GREAT way to "brush the stink off" and get out of the house. I have found teens are more open to talking when their bodies are busy walking and when they are not directly in your sights being inspected. It's so much less intimidating to share a few sentences at a time if you're passing by amazing scenery and getting a good workout.

One year the "kick off" event for the Get Your Tail on the Trail 165-Mile Challenge at Sand Island was delayed. We participated in the postponed event and got to meet Track Cyclist and St. Luke's Ambassador Mandy Marquardt. She had done some volunteer educational work for my employer, it was great to be able to thank her and give her an update on the impact of her contributions.