

The New York Times Highlights Lehigh Valley's Economic Success Story

By LVEDC

LEHIGH VALLEY - The economic renaissance of the Lehigh Valley is featured in a news story posted today in The New York Times.

Written by Patricia Cohen, national economy reporter for The Times, the story features the \$41 billion economy of the Lehigh Valley and highlights the region's manufacturing sector, transportation infrastructure, network of colleges and universities, food and beverage companies, and much more. "The region's success distinguishes it from onetime industrial dynamos in the Northeast and Midwest that have struggled to replace shuttered plants and vanishing jobs," the story reads. "While many midsize and smaller cities have lost out to the superstars — large urban metropolises that gulp up scads of employers, workers and customers — the Lehigh Valley is booming."

The full story can be found on The New York Times website.

The Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) hosted Cohen during her visit to the region, answering questions, providing economic data, and connected her to companies and business leaders in the Lehigh Valley.

"It's very gratifying to have a national news outlet like the New York Times report on the economic renaissance of the Lehigh Valley," said LVEDC President & CEO Don Cunningham.

The piece discusses how local and state officials laid the groundwork for a regional revival following the closure of Bethlehem Steel in 1998, leading up to recent development efforts that, according to the story, "have centered on creating urban playgrounds of restaurants, bars, entertainment and culture that will attract millennial workers."

Cohen writes: "The valley's three small cities, Bethlehem, Easton and Allentown, are within 15 miles of one another. Among them, residents can find an ice hockey rink, concert venues and music festivals, a casino, arts walks, breweries, a minor-league baseball park, golf courses and new downtown apartments."

The story also places the Lehigh Valley in context with the national political scene, identifying it as a bellwether for a significant voting population, while also acknowledging that the economic success story has been driven largely by the region itself.

"The renaissance here has been led by the people, the companies, and the leaders of the Lehigh Valley," Cunningham said. "That's something that transcends U.S. presidents and administrations."

The New York Times feature continues a recent trend of national attention the Lehigh Valley has attracted in recent months.



Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement Pre-enforcement Period Underway

By PEN DOT


HARRISBURG - The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) announced that the required 60-day pre-enforcement period for the statewide Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement (AWZSE) program has begun and will last until March 4.

Pennsylvania's AWZSE program uses vehicle-mounted systems to detect and record motorists exceeding posted work zone speed limits using electronic speed timing devices. The goal is to protect the lives of motorists, passengers and highway workers.

During the pre-enforcement period, automated speed enforcement units will be deployed in active work zones, but violations will not be issued. Work zones are selected to maximize the effectiveness of the systems and will be marked with signage in advance of the enforcement area. Additionally, locations are posted on the project website here.

AWZSE systems are only operational in active work zones where workers are present. Once enforcement begins on March 4, registered owners will receive a warning letter for a first offense, a violation notice and \$75 fine for a second offense, and a violation notice and \$150 fine for third and subsequent offenses. These violations are civil penalties only; no points will be assessed to driver's licenses.

In 2018, there were 1,804 work zone crashes in Pennsylvania, resulting in 23 fatalities, and 43% of work zone crashes resulted in fatalities and/or injuries. Since 1970, PennDOT has lost 89 workers in the line of duty. The PA Turnpike has lost 45 workers since 1945.

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**Ken
Field**

*Owner of Slate
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Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

Do Your Part

There is a lot of talk about renewable energy sources in the trade magazines I read. One article said that wind energy can eventually create electricity at 2 cents per kwh in the near future. At that price oil would need to cost \$.86 per gallon to compete. But the transmission cost for electricity adds about another \$.05 per kwh and that makes \$3.00 per gallon oil competitive. I could never understand how buying electricity made from gas and oil and using it for electric heat could be cost effective. Why not just use gas or oil right in your home and not pay someone to convert the fuel to electricity so you can convert it back to heat? There has to be savings in doing it that way.

That idea brings up the variety of equipment on the market to make heat for your home. If you buy the least expensive model and don't calculate the size correctly, you can create a very wasteful system and do nothing to help the green energy movement. But if you use very efficient equipment and insure that it is sized correctly for your application, you can use any fuel you choose and you will be comfortable and responsible for your share of helping the environment.

The free market insures that there will always be a wide range of choices for home heating appliances. Some, in my opinion, should already be banned due to their inefficiency but as long as heating contractors keep pushing them and there are customers buying them, they will keep making them. Some of the equipment is extremely efficient and will have relatively low operating cost for as long as it runs. Some state governments are working on a plan to require heating oil suppliers to use a 20% blend of soy based oil for heating by 2030 and 50% by 2030. Right now the oil burners being sold are only certified to use a 5% biofuel mixture so major changes will need to find their way into the equipment before too long. 50% biofuel will require outdoor tanks to be heated and probably delivery trucks too. That heat will need to be calculated into the overall cost of heating because it will be a required component.

With 97% efficient gas systems on the market, I have no interest in installing the old 80% efficient furnaces. I won't use inefficient oil furnaces either. If someone wants an inefficient system, they can find an installer but it won't be me.

Ken Field is the owner of Field's Service, Inc. and Slate Belt Energy Services. He has over 40 years of experience in heating, air conditioning and is certificated by RESNET and BPI in various areas of energy conservation. He can be reached at 610-599-8832 or at www.SlateBeltEnergy.com

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Master Watershed Steward Program Seeking New Volunteers

By Bradley J Kunsman, Jr.

Lehigh Valley, Pa - What substance covers 71% of the earth? What vital substance is needed by every cell in all living things? What valuable resource is abused, wasted and taken for granted every day? If you answered water, you're right. We can't live without it. But fresh water is NOT an unlimited resource. Of all the water on the earth only 2.5% is fresh water. Of that, only about 0.3 % is usable by humans. As population increases and urbanization creeps out ever farther into rural areas, the need for water conservation grows.

Lehigh Valley residents that want to learn more about the environment and get involved in local efforts to protect water can look to the Penn State Extension Master Watershed Steward Program. No previous experience is necessary – just a desire to give back. This program brings together university educators from varied disciplines, environmental professionals and local conservation agencies to deliver 40 hours of training to a select group of recruits who in turn volunteer to help protect the Lehigh Valley's most important valuable resource, water. Lessons in topics such as water quality, stream health and restoration, recreational use, groundwater and geology equip the trainees for many projects that benefit the community. Last year 58 volunteers spent nearly 2,300 hours teaching students about stream ecology, planting riparian buffers to filter run-off, installing rain gardens, helping municipalities meet state mandated storm water runoff requirements and delivering educational public workshops for homeowners on rain barrels, pollinator gardens and storm water management.

The program launched in the Lehigh Valley in 2013, and due to its success, there are now Master Watershed Steward programs in seventeen of Pennsylvania's Counties, with almost 400 volunteers. Applications are now being accepted for the 2020 Lehigh and Northampton training class. We are looking for enthusiastic people who want to preserve and improve the quality of life we enjoy in the Lehigh Valley.

The 2020 Master Watershed Steward training program starts Wednesday, March 11 and continues through mid-June on Wednesdays at 6:00 to 8:30 pm. The course also includes three hands-on Saturday field trips. Classes will be held at partnering environmental organizations throughout the Lehigh Valley. The fee for the program is \$125, which helps offset the costs for program materials and professional guest speakers. Scholarships are available for those with financial hardships.

Three information sessions will be offered:

Thursday, January 16 from 6:30 to 8:30pm at Illick's Mill in Bethlehem.

To register online: <https://extension.psu.edu/master-watershed-steward-information-meeting> or call 1-877-345-0691.

Tuesday, January 21 from 6:30 to 8:30pm at the Penn State Extension Office in Allentown.

To register online: <https://extension.psu.edu/master-watershed-steward-information-meeting> or call 1-877-345-0691.