



**Jan Marie Schwartz**

This column is exclusive to the **Blue Valley Times**



You use social media to ask for recommendations for a plumber or a veterinarian, but is this really the right platform to use when you are looking for a child care center? Recently, I saw a post on Facebook from a mom looking for child care for her twenty-two month old. She posted the center she was considering on a Facebook community page and received this feedback: "Love this daycare! So loving and caring, from the owners to the teachers!"

Along with this feedback: "They drove her without a booster. When I confronted the director they lied about it, saying they used a booster, and proceeded to get upset with us when we said that it wasn't acceptable. (They couldn't produce a car seat). If they will lie and cover up something so simple I can not trust them."

Some of the people who responded to this mom's inquiry also named centers they would or wouldn't recommend, just adding to the confusion of whom this parent should entrust to care for her child.

Luckily, the state offers parents an easier way to make an informed decision about child care. The website at [www.findchildcare.pa.gov](http://www.findchildcare.pa.gov) understands parents' concerns of wanting a safe and nurturing environment for their children to grow and learn.

Just like restaurants are rated by stars, Pennsylvania, too, has a star rating system for child care centers. The STARS rating is given by the Office of Child Development and Early

Learning (OCDEL) to help centers continuously improve. Centers voluntarily enter into this program and can move from one star level to the highest star level, four.

According to the site, "Keystone STARS rates child care programs from one to four STARS on things you care about, like meeting state regulations for safety, and offering a kid-friendly atmosphere with good teachers that partner with you to help your child learn. This helps you find the program that is right for your family."



By plugging in your zip code the state's website guides you to find centers in your area, along with hours of operation, ages of children served, cost, and if the site is along a train or bus route.

Remember the parent who complained about their child being transported without a child safety seat? They did the right thing and reported this issue to the Department of Human Services. Once a complaint is made, the department investigates to make sure the child care center takes steps to correct the violation so it doesn't happen again. The department also performs announced and unannounced inspections on child care centers for them to remain certified. All this information is on the state site, so when you reach out to your internet tribe for advice, you can see if the center they are trying to warn you about has multiple complaints or negative sanctions, helping to take some of the guesswork out of finding the best place to care for your child.

**Jan Marie Schwartz is an Outreach Coordinator for the Pre-K for PA campaign. The campaign is supported by individuals and organizations across Pennsylvania who believe that investing in our children is the right choice and an urgent necessity. She also serves as VP of Public Policy for the Lehigh and Northampton Chapter of PennAEYC**

LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON CHAPTER

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Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children



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**Be a fraud fighter! If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.**

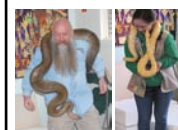
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## Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services

*Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times*

### Experience Counts

No matter where you are or what you do for work, you can learn a lot. The only requirement is that you actually pay attention. YouTube is even a good way to fill in the blanks if you need some extra help in learning how to do something. Of course, after you do it once, you will be much more comfortable doing it a second time but for most homeowners, once is enough. Finding tips for painting or installing ceramic tile or laminate floors or even building a deck is much easier than it used to be before websurfing was so easy. One key is not to mess up the first job because it may be the only one you need done. If that is a ceramic tile floor, you may have to look at a botched up job for the rest of your life and for me, that's just not an option, because even the smallest flaw bothers us perfectionists. And if you tell your wife, you can be sure she will point that flaw out to everyone who enters the house afterward.

Experience in designing heating and air conditioning systems is also very helpful. I need to have confidence in the software I use to do those designs and I need to see the systems perform properly after they are installed. My design software tells me what size a system should be and I know from experience that there is a certain allowance built-in so that no system is too small. Too large is another topic altogether and causes other problems but contractors and designers have a very bad habit of oversizing systems. In today's energy conscious environment, oversizing is a cardinal sin. But if the wrong information is put into a load calculation program, undersizing is very possible too. Did you know that appliances and people are taken into account when sizing an air conditioner? A typical kitchen accounts for 1500 btus because of the heat given off from a refrigerator. TVs, stereos and computers give off heat too and sometimes I need to override the settings to match what I see in a house when I measure. It's all good though because except for one or two systems out of several hundred over 31 years, everything goes according to the design. And I learned from the one or two that I had problems with and, of course, satisfied the homeowner in the end.

I'm not perfect but I try to use every tool available to build a perfect system for my customers and experience is one of those tools.

Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com

**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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## Tyler D. Minnich earns degree at Northampton Community College

By Curtis Parsons

PEN ARGYL - Tyler D. Minnich, son of Dean and Ruth (Fishler) Minnich, of Pen Argyl is one of seventeen students who recently completed requirements for an associate in applied science degree in funeral service at Northampton Community College. Northampton is one of two colleges in Pennsylvania that offers a degree in funeral service education. The program is accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education and is designed to meet the educational requirements for licensure set forth by the Pennsylvania State Board of Funeral directors. Tyler will be serving a year of internship with the Gaffney Parsons Funeral Home and Cremation Services, Inc., "Village of Johnsonville", Bangor, PA.

## Rep. Cartwright Announces Funding For Farm To School Program

By Colleen Gerrity

TANNERSVILLE – U.S. Representative Matt Cartwright (PA-08) announced nearly \$30,000 in federal funds to plan and establish a Farm to School program in Monroe County, an initiative that will increase local students' access to fresh food and help them create healthy nutrition habits from a young age. The funding will be administered by the Pocono Mountains United Way and was awarded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm to School Grant Program.

"Increasing access to locally-produced food in schools can boost our local farm economy and improve our students' overall nutrition," said Rep. Matt Cartwright, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. "I've introduced bills to ensure students have access to healthy food across Northeastern Pennsylvania, and I will continue to advocate for federal funding to support smart programs like Farm to School in our district. I commend the Pocono Mountains United Way for their initiative."

This year, the Pocono Mountains United Way was one of 126 groups across 42 states to receive the Farm to School grant. The group will receive \$29,720 to plan and develop the Farm to School program in Monroe County.

"Monroe County encompasses four rural school districts, 30 buildings, and approximately 25,523 students," said Michael Tukeva, President and CEO of the Pocono Mountains United Way. "Currently, 52% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch. This grant will assist in developing a county-wide plan focused on community collaboration to increase local food purchasing in school cafeterias, while providing students with immersive education in the classroom and in school garden settings. This grant will position our community for future success in the areas of food and nutrition."

The USDA Farm to School Program is a nationally-competitive award given to school districts, nonprofits, and other groups to increase students' access to fresh, local food. The grants range from \$20,000 to \$100,000, and they fund equipment purchases and experiential learning activities, including planting school gardens, offering taste tests to children, and organizing field trips to local farms and food producers. Aside from the program's immense educational value, it also helps local economies by providing farmers, food processors, and manufacturers with a stable, long-term source of revenue.

On April 1st, 2019, United Way of Monroe County and Pocono Alliance merged to become the Pocono Mountains United Way. The group is headquartered in Stroudsburg, PA.