

A new year



KATELYN HIBBARD/Sun-Gazette

Top, Nicole Miller, Transitional Living Centers Inc.'s executive director, left, speaks with Lycoming County Commissioner Jack McKernan. Above, Tony Ecker, co-owner of the Brickyard and Stonehouse restaurants.



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From left, Evan Helsley, Joey Foster and Lt. Mike Merwin, of the South Williamsport Fire Department, said their goals for 2018 are to gain "younger, active members" and expand the live-in program for college students.

Community leaders' '18 goals include putting 'smiles on people'

By KATELYN HIBBARD
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As the old adage goes, "Out with the old, in with the new" — and, for Lycoming County community leaders, that means new community goals and personal resolutions.

For many, time is all-important — more time with friends and family, more time for their businesses and more time for themselves all were

priorities.

Others wished for good health and better business, from creating a financially stable government to bringing new customers into their shops and eateries.

Tony Ecker is one of the three owners of the Brickyard and Stonehouse restaurants, located in Pine Square. He said he and his partners will soon open a brewery in Newberry, to be called New Trail Brewery.

"My goal for 2018 is that we are uber-successful," he said. "And my resolution for our business is to continue to put smiles on people's faces."

For Jay Grandis, founding member and webmaster for the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, community outreach and volunteerism is of the utmost importance this year.

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"I have concrete plans to get out into our community more often with the volunteer work that I've been doing, plus an additional outreach program to help prevent new HIV and HCV transmissions among people who are in active substance addiction," he said. "My goal is to act as a guide to community resources by building trust."

He started on his personal resolutions early, tapering off his smoking habit with the goal of quitting cigarettes entirely to start the new year. He said he also started dieting.

"I figured, why wait the extra few days to start my resolutions?" he said.

Transitional Living Centers Inc.'s executive director, Nicole Miller, also is focused on her health this year and hopes to encourage her new work family to live more healthily, too.

"My personal resolution is always to maintain a healthy lifestyle," she said. "This year, I'd like to maybe branch that lifestyle out to my employees and the residents here at TLC."

Some folks' resolutions are to keep working hard on goals they made in the past. Ted and Dana Pashakis, owners of Main Street Grille in Muncy, are hoping to donate \$5,000 to their community this year as the last installment of a goal they set in the late 1990s.

"Since we started in June 1998, our goal has been to donate a total of \$45,000 to our local community by our 20th anniversary," Ted Pashakis said.

The Lycoming County commissioners have big goals for the new year, as well.

Tony Mussare aims to "be more visible in the community ... to improve working conditions in certain departments ... and to act on selling surplus properties.

"That will help us reduce overhead costs and achieve our reduction goal," he said.

His personal New Year's resolution is to spend more time with his family.

Jack McKernan also said he would like to spend more time with his family, especially his children.

"My kids are getting older and going different ways, so I will look for opportunities to spend time with them," he said.

McKernan added that he has been "lax" with his business as well as with staying fit and getting

outdoors, so he also would like to find more time for those things. In order to find that time, he wants to stick to the budget and reign in county spending.

"My primary focus has been the county, so, if I get that in the position I'm really comfortable with, it'd give me more time to make sure my business is secure and to enjoy running and hunting," he said.

Rick Mirabito echoed his cohorts, stating he's looking forward to working with elected officials, department heads and county employees to cut down on spending as well as interacting with the community more.

As far as a personal resolution, Mirabito hopes to take care of his mental and physical health.

"They sound kind of mundane, but they're actually important," he said with a chuckle. "I want to sleep more. I'd like to exercise more. I'd like to read more, especially fiction, and I'd like to cut down on my sugars and chocolate."

At The Clothier, 138 W. Fourth St., owner Francis Ciccarelli is dealing with the post-Christmas rush of customers seeking new clothes. He said he and his employees will continue to do the best they can.

"As for a resolution," he said with a smile, "here's to good health. I just want us to be healthy."

Jim Plankenhorn, president and CEO of STEP Inc., is looking forward to implementing the organization's fourth endowment, the Community Collaboration Pathway Endowment, which will help support Service Navigation and AmeriCorps programming.

"As the region's community action agency, we will continue to be a leader in providing dozens of human service-related services to the residents of Lycoming and Clinton counties and beyond," he said.

The South Williamsport Fire Department also is geared toward providing better community service. Chief Casey Lowmiller said the department hopes to put on more public safety events and programs as well as bolster recruitment efforts.

"My goal for 2018 is to not only re-engage the community with the fire department, but to get out there and be better stewards to the community," he said. "In short, recruitment and community engagement, community involvement, community activity."