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**Imago Innovations offer
creative problem-solving**

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**PM Exchanges/ Ribbon
Cuttings**



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**IMC devoted to helping
industry 'innovate, grow
and prosper'**



From Jason Fink's Desk - President/CEO of the Chamber

As we say goodbye to 2023, we look ahead to 2024. An article I was reading leading up to the new year was about the new regulations and laws that would be taking effect January 1. There were a host of them involving crime and public safety, pets, health care, education, property tax and food.

Examples of a couple of these include porch pirating is now a felony and uses a grading system to increase penalties that focuses on repeat offenders. You see theft examples all the time online with the number of cameras people have near their front entryways. It's more prevalent than you might think. Dangerous dogs must be muzzled, leashed, and under physical restraint. Additional penalties and fines will be added for violations. Governor Shapiro also signed a law to remove out-of-pocket costs for genetic testing for hereditary breast, ovarian, prostate, and other cancer syndromes.

In the area of education, one of the new laws going into effect provides school districts with more flexibility with how they set their school day and year. Districts will now have the choice of going a minimum of 180 days or 900 elementary hours/990 secondary hours. If they choose to go by hours, the school day could be lengthened which would shorten the number of school days. Conversely, should they shorten the day, it would extend the number of school days.

This caught my interest as I know that it's different in other states and countries in how they set the school calendar. It's sometimes even discussed during the broadcast of the annual Little League World Series with kids who might already be in school when the series starts. I find it interesting, as there is a correlation between schools and the employment sector. That became very evident during the pandemic when there were kids at home schooling and parents who still needed to be at work.

My expectations for the districts here in the county is that we won't see wholesale fundamental changes like those that already exist in other states across the country. With the change in the law, schools could extend the days by about an hour which would surprisingly take almost a month off of the traditional school year. Schools could end in early May or start the school year in late September. They could also take more breaks during the current late August through early June calendar year or go four days a week. The latter in that option would be interesting to see how it would play out as more discussion is taking place nationally about a four day work week.

Another option they could go with would be to shorten the day and go to year-round school. Year-round school is common in many countries as well as some states. One positive item cited with this form of schooling is that students don't have as much relearning as is found with our current 180 day schedule.

It's interesting the various possibilities that are open now that the districts have this flexibility. To me, it provides a new dynamic in how kids can be educated, which in the end should be the primary focus. Knowing the superintendents and those on school boards, I know that is how they see it. We're fortunate to have the solid education programming here in the county for kids in Lycoming County. If you want to get more detail on all of the new laws and regulations coming into effect as of January 1, just Google "new laws for 2024 in Pennsylvania".

Looking ahead to 2024, I'm cautiously optimistic that we're going to see a carrier at the airport providing mainline carrier connections to a hub airport. What that ends up looking like, I'm not sure. It will most likely be a smaller plane with more regular flights. Talking to a number of business people, they'll take whatever is offered that meets their basic needs if it means they can fly from IPT.

It'll also be good to see the Maynard Commons project built this year. Earthwork is already underway for the Wawa that will be the cornerstone to that development.

There are a number of other projects that are either scheduled to be completed this year or that will be initiated during the course of 2024. One thing that we do know is that at the start of 2025, Lycoming County will definitely be changed from where we sit here at the beginning of 2024. It'll be up to all of us to determine if that change will be for the good. I wish you all a happy and prosperous 2024!

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Doc's Side of the Moon: (570) 398-7675
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*Happy
New Year*

**From the staff at your
local Chamber of
Commerce!**



December PM Exchange/Ribbon Cutting



On December 14, Journey Bank held a holiday PM Exchange at their South Williamsport location. Guests were treated to delicious food and beverages. Thank you to Journey Bank for putting on a great event and to those who attended.

The Williamsport Home cut the ribbon on the Woodland Vista Personal Care Suites at their location on Ravine Road. Congratulations on this great new space!



Leadership Lycoming Holds Law Enforcement and Judiciary Program Day

The Leadership Lycoming Class of 2024 had their third Program Day; Law Enforcement and Judiciary, beginning at the Lycoming County Courthouse. Dan Wrench, LL Class of 2023 and Karen Retorick, LL Class of 2010, were hosts for the program day and began by offering some background about themselves. After that, they introduced the first presentation; Administration of Justice by the Courts: The Honorable Nancy L. Butts, President Judge, The Honorable William P. Carlucci, Adrienne J. Stahl, Court Administrator, Jerri Rook, Facility Canine Handler & Secretary to President Judge Butts, and Ludo, Courthouse Facility Canine. The morning continued with a presentation from Bail Release and Probation from Harry Rogers, Bail Release Program Manager, LL Class of 2004, Matt Gotshall, Sara Johns, and Adam Lorson, Adult Probation Officers.

The agenda continued on to the James V. Brown Library, where the class had an Active Shooter Training Presentation by Chief Deputy Eric Spiegel, Lycoming County Sheriff's Office.

The morning continued with a discussion about their police ride along sessions with Chief Justin Snyder and Assistant Chief Jason Bolt, Williamsport City Police Department; followed by a K9 Presentation with Sergeant Brian McGee, Officer Minier and K9 Officer Tacoma. Lunch was served by Don Waltman's Market House, where Magisterial District Judges Gary A. Whiteman and Christian Frey joined the class for lunch and a question and answer session.

The afternoon continued with a leadership discussion and workshop with Keith Kuzio, Principal, Intentional AdVennTures, LL Class of 1995.

The day ended with a tour of the Lycoming County Prison with Brad Shoemaker, Warden, LL Class of 2011 and Ryan Barnes, Deputy Warden of Security, LL Class of 2003.

Thank you to this year's Leadership Lycoming's Annual Sponsors, North Central Sight Services and UPMC. Special thank you to the James V. Brown Library for hosting us on location throughout the day and for a delicious lunch from Don Waltman's Market House. Thanks to Dan Wrench and Karen Retorick for hosting the program day. Thank you to Nikolina Cleaver, STEP Head Start, Karley Welsh, Geisinger, and Michael Hickey, C&N Bank.



Left: Officer Minier and K9 Officer Tacoma



Right: Lycoming County Courthouse

FEATURE MEMBER



PHOTO PROVIDED

Business leaders from throughout the region work on Lean Manufacturing Level Two certification in an IMC course in this photo shared by the center on social media.

IMC devoted to helping industry ‘innovate, grow and prosper’

By ISABELLA BRIDY
ibridy@sungazette.com

Innovative Manufacturers’ Center (IMC) is a private-public partnership located inside of the Pennsylvania College of Technology. IMC is a manufacturer partner with 12 counties in Pennsylvania, providing them “with the most effective regional, state and national resources to help them innovate, grow and prosper.”

IMC was founded in 1988 by corporate members of Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania College of Technology and SEDA-COG. It was formed to accommodate a request from then Governor Casey regarding the Industrial Resource Center program (IRC).

“The IRC program was created to support small to medium-sized manufacturers (under 500 employees) compete more effectively through the adoption of

modern manufacturing philosophies, techniques, and technologies,” According to Lauri Moon, the Manager of Outreach and Special Products, “IMC can work with manufacturers to address any need they may have including production improvements, quality services, information technology and cyber security, safety and human resources, to name a few.”

With numerous sub-categories, IMC offers Manufacturing Assistance Services such as supply chain optimization and innovation engineering systems, technology-driven market intelligence (TDMI), and marketing and business growth such as website design, brand development, and digital marketing and SEO assistance.

Considering the scope of services, it is no surprise that the team behind IMC is comprised of experts. “Our staff includes a team of professionals with extensive business and manufacturing experience spanning many years who work directly with the manu-

facturers of our region to provide them with objective advice, strategic perspective, high-value services and solutions through access to regional, state and national

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NEW MEMBER

Imago Innovations offer creative problem-solving

By **MATTHEW COURTER**

mcourter@sungazette.com

Imago Innovations is a Williamsport-based organization aiming to help businesses use creative means to solve many of the problems they encounter.

"I did my graduate work for my master's degree in creativity and innovation through Drexel University," said Mitchell Marcello, owner and founder, "and during the pandemic, all of these organizations were trying to figure out how to navigate these new challenges."

"So I had an opportunity to take what I was learning and start teaching and creating my own content and walking them through an innovation process."

It was through this experience that Marcello realized how impactful using these concepts could be to help businesses solve a host of problems.

And, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became apparent that changes to the landscape of business would be profound and long lasting.

"Things are changing faster today than they ever have before, and COVID was something that just turned up the dial to 100," Conrad said.

Before he knew it, Marcello, along with business partner, Imago Innovations instructor, Ben Conrad, had a full fledged business estab-

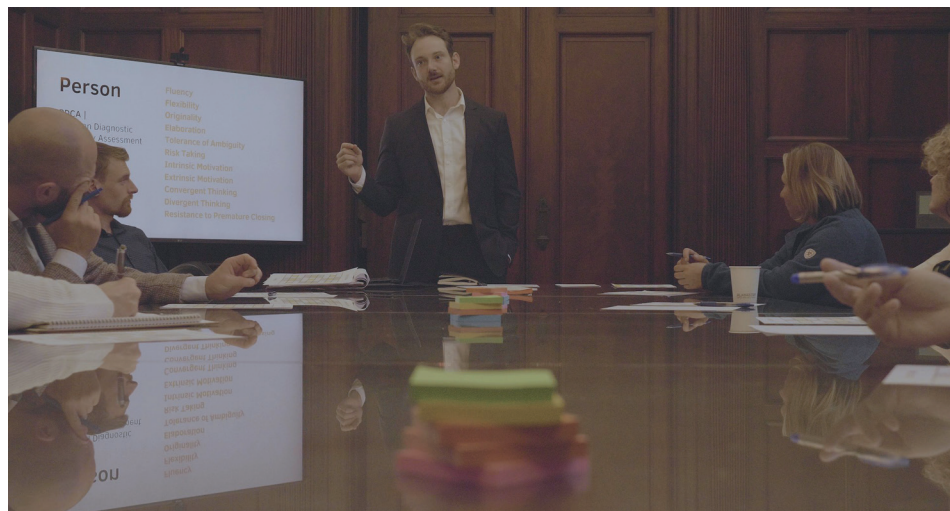


PHOTO PROVIDED

Mitch Marcello, founder and owner of Imago Innovations, speaks to a group in this photo shared by the company on social media.

lished a year ago this month, a process Conrad referred to as "totally organic."

"We teach people a process called design thinking," Marcello explains, "its a human-centered process of innovation that begins with a challenge or a problem, helps us understand that problem in a robust way, and creates a space for many people to come up with many different ideas to find a solution."

"We then bring that down into one or two really good ideas, and then we test and implement them."

This design concept can be adapted to suit the needs of a wide range of industries.

"Whatever their problem is, we would walk them through the design thinking process to take their perspectives, and the prospect of their clients," Conrad said. "What do your clients need? What are your clients' desires? And basically, how do

you design a solution to your problem that really helps out your clients or customers?"

"At the heart of it, design thinking is a mindset," Marcello said. "One of our biggest wins is once businesses acquire this mindset, they are already equipped to respond with flexibility and fluency to any future challenges."

Marcello and Conrad say that Imago can provide solutions to both established businesses who are facing new challenges, or even "stuckness" that hinders their growth, as well as entrepreneurs to help find ways to appeal to new customers.

"Either one will be benefited by these processes," Conrad said.

Imago's approach to problem-solving is broad-based, as evidenced by the wide range of clientele they serve.

"We've worked with an architecture firm to develop

a different drywall product, we've worked with retail to change employee-customer interactions to increase community engagement, and we've also worked with libraries and colleges," Conrad said.

"It makes problems feel like opportunities, which is a blessing," Conrad said, "if you have creative confidence, this can be an opportunity for something new that works and makes your customers have a better experience or makes your employees have a better experience, that's a really satisfying conclusion."

Improving working conditions is an area that is of particular importance to the business partners.

"One thing we've observed with millennials and younger Gen Z is that they increasingly don't want to work in toxic environments," Marcello explains,

"they want their voices to be heard and to be valued, and when there is a creative workplace, those ideas will be heard and there's going to be an environment that is not toxic."

"So it's almost like we're deconstructing, in that we're trying to build places that people want to show up to work, and that's going to result in higher retention, better hiring practices, and happier and more productive employees."

One of the biggest advances accelerated by the pandemic has been the ex-

pansion of working remotely, which has allowed for several businesses, including Imago, to expand their audience.

"Remote working gives us a lot of possibilities in terms of where we would go, and I think we would go wherever the need is," Conrad said.

"We've worked with companies from New Hampshire, to Colorado, and all the way to the LEAF Foundation in Portland," Marcello added.

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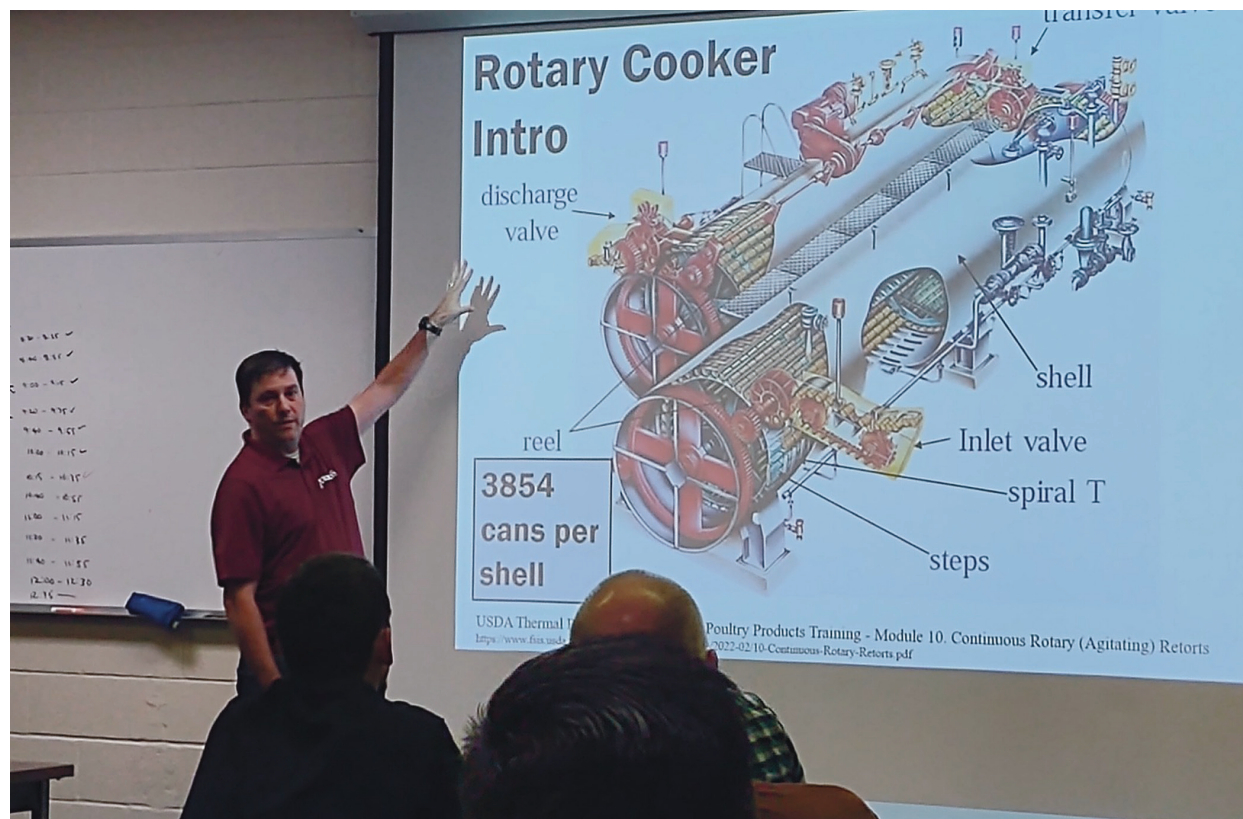


PHOTO PROVIDED

Business leaders from throughout the region work on Lean Manufacturing Level One certification in an IMC course in this photo shared by the center on social media.

Imago Innovations offer creative problem-solving

(From Page 7)

And, while the ability to work with companies all across the country and potentially the world, has been a boon to their operation, Marcello and Conrad's focus is always here at home.

"We're really grateful for a lot of the work that we've been getting, especially locally," Conrad said, "because we really want to invest in Williamsport and Lycoming County, in the businesses here, and help the culture grow."

"We currently have a class at Lycoming College, teaching students this design thinking process to acquire this mindset for innovation," Marcello said.

Though design thinking is an attractive tool with an impressive track record, the cost of firms such as Imago is often an obstacle for smaller busi-

nesses, something that Marcello and Conrad hope to change.

"Design thinking is very popular with Fortune 500 companies, and often comes with a pretty high paywall," Conrad explained. So, our hope is that we can offer something that is unique to the Williamsport area, for a reasonable price, to help it become more of a center of innovative enterprise."

In the coming months, Imago Innovations will be holding a free roundtable presentation to educate local businesses on what it has to offer.

"It's going to be a community event," Conrad says, "and for any businesses in the area that want to come and just learn about creative problem solving, this is a great, great way to do that."

One of the most useful tools at their

disposal since becoming an IRS registered business has been the Williamsport Chamber of Commerce.

"The chamber is one of those things that has a lot to offer, and you get what you put in," Conrad said.

"Networking and being able to learn about what people do and how we can work together is awesome, and the chamber is just a great epicenter for all that," Marcello said.

"The more you take advantage of their offerings, the more connections you make," Conrad added.

It's a great way to be connected with our local community, and that's one of our missions right now."

To learn more about all that Imago Innovations has to offer, please visit their website at www.innovateimago.com, or check their social media.

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resources," Moon said. "The IMC team enjoys connecting clients with trustworthy resources they can use to elevate their business. To see the impact we have on Central PA manufacturers to grow and prosper is very rewarding."

The Innovative Manufacturers' Center is currently serving manufacturers in Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Union, Snyder, Clinton, Centre, Mifflin, Juniata, Huntington, Blair and Bedford Counties, though that may change due to recent financial backing.

"IMC recently received a Department of Energy grant focusing on clean energy and energy improvements," Moon said. "IMC is also the recipient of a grant that will help us support manufacturers [in] the Department of Defense supply chain."

IMC provides online classes as well as manufacturer assistance, with a five-day webinar series coming up in January, called "Meeting the HR Challenge." In late January and early February, there will also be Lean Manufacturing Level One Certification and Level Two Certification programs available. "Other events to be held later in the year focus [on] cyber security, innovation and ISO Internal Auditor Training," said Moon.

Innovative Manufacturers' Center (IMC) can be found at 1127 W 4th St, Williamsport, PA 17701 or online at imcpa.com.



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Upcoming Member Events

Ribbon Cutting: Home Instead - Williamsport

Saturday, January 6, 2024 | Open House @ noon | Ribbon Cutting @ 2pm
 1032 Washington Blvd, Williamsport

Enjoy light refreshments and meet the owners, Chris & Nancy Waldman, and their Care Professionals!

Ribbon Cutting: Revive & Align Pilates - New Location

Saturday, January 13, 2024 | Open House & Ribbon Cutting @ noon
 421 Washington Blvd, Williamsport

Check out the new studio and meet the owner, Alicia Faulkner!

Ribbon Cutting: Fair Play Distillers

Friday, January 19, 2024 | Doors open @ 11am | Ribbon Cutting @ 5pm
 2314 Lycoming Creek Road, Williamsport

Fair Play Distillers is a craft distillery making Vodka, Rum, and Whiskey. Enjoy a sample in the tasting room and meet the owners, Damon & Drew Lomison.

Jersey Shore Area and Montoursville Chamber of Commerce Winter Mixers

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For more information, visit www.williamsport.org or email Taryn Hartle at thartle@williamsport.org



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