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Winery owner carries on her late husband's business

Customer service at forefront of downtown staple Lang's Chocolates



J.L. Winters Jewelers offers brand names, customization



## From Jason Fink's Desk - President/CEO of the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce

One month down and eleven to go for 2025. Like most, I have this like/dislike feeling towards January. Good things I like are primarily sports related with college football playoffs and bowl games, NFL playoffs, NHL and NBA, NCAA basketball all abundant for watching. One thing that I particularly enjoyed this college football season was the new playoff system. I realize that there was a financial consideration driving this decision, but from the pure sport of it, this was a step ahead in determining a clearer national champion. This most certainly isn't going to be the last change, but I do see it being a positive evolution for the sport.

The dislikes are primarily a dislike for cold in general and the dark dreary time that we have here during the winter months. Snow for me was great as a kid but now it's a pain because I'm now the adult responsible for clearing my truck, driveway and sidewalks. And it looks like, from what Phil said, that we're in for another six weeks of winter. So, now it's time to make the most of it and at the top of the list is doing the Eagles Mere toboggan slide. Happy for them that there's enough ice this year to make this happen. Based upon the extended forecast, they should have cold enough weather to keep that running into March.

Looking ahead, the Governor will be making his budget address early in February which kicks off the budget season for 2025. Time flies as this will already be his third budget. Key on his list is education funding and energy production. Not surprising to see education be on the list as it's been consistently one that he and Governor Wolf have had as a priority. The question I've always posed is with PA being one of the top states investing in education, why the need for more. It's my understanding, which has been shown in the recent court decision, that this is more about the distribution of funds to schools. That shouldn't take more money to fix, just a reallocation of the funds.

It's good to see energy be a priority for the Governor. Given the increased demand for electric and Pennsylvania's ability to meet it if permitted, this should be the number one priority for us. Pennsylvania's greatest asset is our ability to produce energy.

A key first step to getting this accomplished would be for the Governor to drop his appeal of the Commonwealth Court's ruling that Governor Wolf's unilateral decision to sign Pennsylvania into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) was unconstitutional. The Court ruled that entrance into RGGI could only be done through legislation duly enacted by the General Assembly. It's difficult to see how the Governor wants to advance a pro-energy platform when he's still appealing the decision by the Commonwealth Court on RGGI. We would see an increase to our electricity rates for consumers, cuts in energy and manufacturing jobs and closures of Pennsylvania power plants. There have been no new investments in baseload generation in Pennsylvania in the six years of the attempt to enter the commonwealth into RGGI. You're only seeing private investment such as the recent announcement by Microsoft agreeing to terms for repowering Three Mile Island. This will be a benefit to Microsoft, but won't impact power into the grid since it's only for their data center needs.

Another meaningful step to our becoming a critical power generation state would be for a streamlining of the permitting process for new power plants. Having been involved with the efforts that were taken by Moxie Energy to develop the Patriot Power Plant in Clinton Township, I saw firsthand the lengthy and costly process for a plant to receive approval to be built. This is not to be viewed as advocating for no regulations, but more to seeing it streamlined given that this involves all level of government, including federal, state and local oversight. One only needs to look at the experience in Renovo that led to the power plant efforts being shuttered there after millions of dollars were invested in attempting to bring one to that community.

I'm always hopeful with the Governor's budget address that it will bring positive results to those of us that live, work and recreate in this great Commonwealth. It's a key instrument that guides much of what is done here and I'm looking forward to hearing what he envisions for 2025 and 2026.



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*Thank You for  
joining us!*



# Leadership Lycoming Education Day



The Class of 2025 started their chilly “Education” program day at Pennsylvania College of Technology – Madigan Library. We sat down with Dr. Michael Reed, President of Pennsylvania College of Technology. Dr. Reed shared some history on the college, along with the impressive strides they are taking to set their students up for success. The class was then introduced to Dr. Shelley Moore, Senior Director of the Center for Career Design. She led the class through the College Relations Department, showing supports and services that are in place to help set students up for success after their college experience. Expanding on this, we were introduced to Shanin Dougherty, Corporate Relations Officer and Erin Shultz, College Relations Manager. The class had the privilege of touring the Physician Assistant Program and the Machining and Welding facility. The class observed the hands-on experience offered within both programs.

We then set off to STEP Head Start, Round Hills Campus. The class received a tour of the campus and learned about Head Start, Community Action, and the other numerous programs offered by the agency. Thank you to Rachelle Abbott, President; Laurel Cowher, Head Start Center-Based Manager; and Carolyn Hawk, Director.

Next up was Williamsport Area High School where the class was introduced to Dr. Justin Ross, Head Principal and Matt Fisher, Career and Technical Education Director. The class enjoyed a delicious lunch served by the Culinary Arts Students at the Millionaire Café. We then heard from Dr. Ross on the opportunities available to students ranging from Curriculum, Career Pathways, Clubs, and Athletics. Each member of the class then received a personalized tour of the school with a student ambassador.

Expanding on the experience, the class was able to sit down to discuss with several professionals regarding alternative education options in our community. A round robin discussion was held with Erica Hoyt, Special Education Supervisor with BLAST IU 17; Audra Mazzante, Director of Career Education with Insight PA Cyber School; Karena Shaner, Day Treatment Supervisor with Lycoming County Children and Youth Services; Dr. Chad Greevy, Assistant Principal/Curriculum Director with St. John Neumann Regional Academy; Robert Getz, Director and Education Program Specialist with Career and Family Pathways Program along with Adult Education Instructor, Martha Hunter; Dr. Carolyn McKeon, Director of LCC Homeschool Assoc. of PA; and Nathan Minium, Executive Director of Lycoming CTC.

Finally, the class arrived at Lycoming College - Detwiler Planetarium. They were greeted by Dr. Chip Edmonds, Executive Vice President. He enthusiastically spoke to the class about Lycoming College and the opportunities they offer students and the community. To end the day, Melissa Kiehl, Planetarium Manager, gave an overview of the Planetarium and presented the class with a full experience by showing the film “From Earth to the Universe”.

Thank you to all for taking the time out of your busy schedules to provide us with these opportunities and experiences!

A BIG thank you to our hosts for the day: Brittany Fischer, Class of '20 and Lauri Moon, Class of '04.

As always, we would like to continue to say THANK YOU to our Annual Sponsors: Hope Enterprises, West Pharmaceuticals, UPMC North Central PA and North Central Sight Services, Inc.!



# FEATURE MEMBER



PHOTO PROVIDED

Oregon Hill Winery, with locations at 840 Oregon Hill Road, Morris and 87 Main St., Wellsboro, recently celebrated 42 years of business.

## Winery owner carries on her late husband's business

By **MARK MARONEY**

[mmaroney@sungazette.com](mailto:mmaroney@sungazette.com)

Oregon Hill Winery celebrates 42 years in business this year, and it is a story worth lifting a glass and toasting to.

Owner Karon Swendrowski gave all credit to her late husband, Eric, who, at an early age, learned winemaking from his father, Al Swendrowski.

Today, Karon operates the winery and two satellite wineries, one at McElhattan in Clinton County and another in Wellsboro in Tioga County.

"Eric was 12 and helped his father make wine in the cellar of their family residence next to the winery," Karon said. "He made his first 50 gallons of wine when he was 16."

His father and mother, Heiga, had turned a small country store and gas station just south of Morris into the Idlewood Inn, a popular restaurant serving German fare.

Al made wine for the family, just as his ancestors did, Eric told the Elmira Star-Gazette.

He helped his father and developed a special interest in science, wanting to use it in a creative way that would allow him to remain in the area.

In 1983, Eric, a graduate of Wellsboro Senior High School, formed the Oregon Hill Wine Company Inc. He spent the next two years experimenting with local wine-grape varieties and European species.

He pressed forward - not only overcoming the challenge of cleaning out a dairy barn next to the family home that would become the winery it is today, but also the climate of Morris.

Such altitude, late spring frosts and early fall frosts are hard on the native variety of the species and the European (venifera), which is more easily damaged because it does not withdraw its sap completely in the winter. Instead, he and his father tried to graft the venifera onto the native root stocks.

He and his father watched for well-established

vines growing on farms or in backyards and if they saw one would ask the owner if they could have a root to use for grafting.

He placed hand-painted directional signs on Route

(See WINERY, Page 10)

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## Customer service at forefront of downtown staple Lang's Chocolates

By **MATTHEW COURTER**

mcourter@sungazette.com

Finding that perfect sweet treat can be a difficult task, but luckily when the craving strikes, comfort can be found in the heart of downtown at Lang's Chocolates.

"It's always been a life-long hobby for me, so I just had to give it a go as a business," said owner and operator William Lang, who started the business, located at 350 Pine St., with his father and mother in 2006.

"We've had lots of success with local, as well as national sales and selling online," he said.

Lang is fully involved in every facet of the business, especially the creation of their goodies.

"I've always enjoyed working with chocolate and making things out of it, so it's been fun," Lang said.

"Most of it, I learned on my own, and it actually stretches back further for me, to elementary school when I was playing around with chocolate," he said.

Although there are some items they purchase outside of the company, most of them are made in house.

Always looking to expand their customer base, the company began work on sugar alternatives in 2017.

"Now we have a limited selection of low carb and sugar free items," Lang said.

"A lot of times when people think of sugar free, they don't think it tastes good.



MATT COURTER/Sun-Gazette

**Lang's Chocolates can be found at 350 Pine St., Williamsport.**

But, we've worked really hard to make our stuff taste good and still be sugar free," he said.

Taking customer service to another level, Lang's Chocolates produces and packages all of their products not involving the nine major food allergens.

Some of Lang's most popular items include their sea salt caramels, peanut butter flowers, chocolate covered Oreos and caramel pretzels, according to Lang.

Other customer favorites include chocolate cups and shot glasses.

And, while most items are available through their website, Lang stressed that there are always new sweets that are available only at the store.

"I was just making up a mango cream the other day that I don't have on the website because I like to see how the general public likes it before I spend all the effort and time to put it up online," he

explained.

Lang is enthusiastic to keep that experimentation going.

"A few years ago, we tried a bunch of hot and spicy things, and that was all very much driven by the oil and gas crews that were coming in, so we made a spicy peanut brittle. We did some spicy chocolates. Unfortunately those kinds of things tend to not please everybody," he said.

"I was working on a Turkish taffy kind of candy. I haven't quite perfected the recipe yet, but I'm working on it," Lang said.

With a fully functioning website with shipping options available, it is perhaps no surprise that Lang's has moved into the international market.

"We ship to Canada on a regular basis, but we've had orders go all the way out to Australia, England, France and Germany," he said, cred-

iting Little League with helping to get the business' name

out to countries far and wide.

While Lang stressed that his chocolate is the best around, he also pointed out that they're the only candy-maker in Lycoming County.

"There's nobody else who's selling chocolate at a retail level that actually makes anything in Williamsport. They're buying it in from everybody else and then reselling it," he said.

"We've got the ability to do custom chocolates, custom flavors, get things turned around in quick order, so, if we get an order in on a Monday or Tuesday, we can have it ready for some-

body Wednesday, Thursday," Lang said.

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, Lang's is gearing up for customers coming in for fresh chocolate-covered strawberries, an offer that differs from area competitors, Lang said.

"They're going to be liquid chocolate that morning, and then by afternoon, you're going to have a strawberry ready for Valentine's Day, whereas, other people around here are not going to be using high qual-

(See CUSTOMER, Page 10)



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# LEGACY MEMBER

## Hometown girl with a global reach, J.L. Winters Jewelers offers brand names, customization

By **MATTHEW COURTER**  
mcourter@sungazette.com

"It was always my dream to open up a jewelry store," said Jodi Winters, owner and operator of J.L. Winters Jewelers.

Winters graduated from Williamsport Area High School in 1977, and was already working in the business two years later, and officially opened her own shop in 1993.

Her first setup was in a 10x5 room with five showcases. Today she owns the entire complex adjoining her store, 1460 John Brady Drive, Muncy.

"I've always had a great eye for detail so it pulled me towards the jewelry industry. Plus, I love it myself. I love every part of it, all the colors of gold and diamonds and gemstones," Winters, 65, said.

Winters brings that enthusiasm into every interaction with each of her thousands of customers.

"When a young man comes in to find something for whom he's going to ask to marry him, it's really cool to make that happen. And that process can take a little time, because we want it to be the exact thing that she's gonna love when he proposes to her," Winters said.

As opposed to many chain store, Winters said her store offers a no pressure shopping experience.

"We honor their wishes. Most people run their business from their head, but I run it from my heart," she said.

And because Winters is not beholden to a president or share-



PHOTO PROVIDED

**Jodi Winters, owner and operator of J.L. Winters Jewelers, stands next to a display case in her 1460 John Brady Drive, Muncy, store.**

holders, her business is able to offer customers options not seen at larger retailers.

"We always have an interest free finance option for those that need to make payments, instead of a big lump sum. I actually pay for that," Winters explained.

"That's how you get people to come back. That's how you have relationships," she stressed.

"I'm not here to check somebody out, I'm here to actually in-

teract with these folks. I've cried with people that have lost loved ones, and I've laughed with people who've had wonderful experiences and that's the way we've always been for 31 years," Winters said.

Other options available to potential customers include free jewelry inspections and watch band adjustments.

While Winters collaborates with many local creators, includ-

ing sets of wine glasses with the couples' names on them to toast with at their wedding gifted with every engagement ring purchase, when it comes to the diamonds, Jodi takes a direct route.

"I go straight to diamond cutters and diamond companies," she said, noting Le Vian and Shy Creation among the many recognizable brands she carries.

Le Vian is a 500-year-old company that has made jewelry for the Royal family, while Shy Creation is a brand typically found only in metro areas, according to Winters.

Winters has traveled the world to establish these connections, having visited Hong Kong, Europe and India, where she has a diamond growing machine in the largest laboratory in the world, the first in the state to have such an operation.

The store carries a wide variety of products from bracelets to necklaces, boasting over 1,200 engagement rings, all of which are all fully customizable.

"We've taken deceased spouse's wedding bands and turned them into crosses. The sky's the limit. Anything you can think of that you can wear, we can make it," she said.

All gold sold by Winters comes with a lifetime warranty.

"Say it's a gold bracelet, and they break it, they bring it back to us, we send it back to the designer, and they send us a brand new bracelet at no expense to them," she said. anymore.

And while many jewelry chains are increasingly charging for warranties on their products, Winters

continues to shy away from that practice.

"If you've got a problem with the piece, as long as it doesn't look like you ran over with a car, we will take care of it," she said.

And, just in time for Valentine's Day, Winters is running a special where each person to spend \$149 or more will receive a dozen roses and a little box of chocolates, according to Winters.

Winters is the descendant of Italian immigrants, whose family continues to thrive in the area with three successful children and five grandchildren all living within a 12 minutes drive of her and her husband.

This multi-generational success story is something Winters looks at as a big piece of her success story.

"We are personal. We work with each person individually, with undivided attention to their needs, their budget, their wishes and their designs because jewelry is for a lifetime," she said.

"We have people come in say, 'this is an I Love You gift,' and that's wonderful too. But a lot of times, these pieces represent an event," Winters said.

"So we work with people very, very closely. And sometimes we'll get diamonds for them a couple times before they really like what it is," she said.

And, quality for quality, nobody can beat our prices," Winters said.

For more information on J.L. Winters Jewelers and a look at their extensive inventory, please visit [www.jlwintersjewelers.com](http://www.jlwintersjewelers.com).



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# Winery owner carries on her late husband's business

(From Page 6)

287. The burma shave signs consisted of the simple word winery and an arrow.

"Eric started the winery at 19, becoming the youngest vintner in Pennsylvania," Karon said.

Whenever his father made wine one of those varieties was a raspberry Joli, a French word for pretty because of its vibrant color.

Unbeknownst to Eric it would become a wine carried on by Karon and the couple's daughters, Katarina, 22, who has since become sommelier, and Alexandra, 20.

"Eric was teaching our daughters how to make wine when he died," Karon said solemnly. "He died of a catastrophic brain event."

"We had some local raspberry juice in the winery," she said. "I wanted to make something special with it."

Today, Oregon Hill Winery offers Raspberry Joli – a tribute to the Swendrowski family legacy.

Today, where cow stanchions once

stood, customers can taste various wines in the taste room, Karon said.

Another portion of the barn is reserved for bottling, where the temperature is perfect for storage. Generally, customers can't go past the tasting room. Some, however, are given an informal tour. "We show them around," Karon said.

Karon also decided to make a chocolate cherry Joli, which is cherry wine with chocolate, offering customers two dessert-style wines, and a Mountain Honey variety, using Dutch Gold orange blossom honey made in Lancaster and blended with a traminette grape, which offers those trying it a floral taste mingled with the orange blossom honey.

"It is a sweet, different and complex wine," Karon said.

The McElhattan winery location is in a former horse barn at the old Shoemaker Estate. Karon officially opened it in June 2019.

It is different from the original barn where wine is made. Here, people bring

their own food and sometimes enjoy live music events where folks can enjoy a glass of wine, a cocktail or a beer and listen to the entertainment.

Two months after McElhattan opened, Karon opened a Main Street Wellsboro storefront, which offers retail sales and tastings.

As for the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce impact on the wineries.

"We've been a member of the chamber since the get-go," Karon said.

She noted how the folks at the Chamber are helping in networking, promotions and getting customers to visit the winery and sample and try the varieties.

She states her goal is to have people try it, become loyal and return customers and spread the word.

Karon has said she places her faith in managers of the satellite locations and a skilled winemaker and assistant winemaker who continue to use Eric's and the family recipes to make up to 35 wines in stock.

So, take a trip to one of the wineries and buy a bottle or two. Pour a glass and be sure to offer your special someone a toast - and check on all of the events and special sales by visiting the Oregon Hill Winery website at [oregonhillwinery.com](http://oregonhillwinery.com) and be sure to look for updates on their Facebook site.



The Williamsport Sun-Gazette is printed on newsprint which contains recycled material



MATT COURTER/Sun-Gazette

Chocolates can be seen in a display case at Lang's Chocolates in Williamsport.

## Customer service at forefront of downtown staple Lang's Chocolates

(From Page 7)

ity chocolate, or they're going to get them from somebody who's dipped them days or maybe weeks prior," he said.

Lang is extremely thankful that those in the area embraced the fruits of his passion

so long ago.

"We love the community. We love working with people. We have several different relationships with local companies that we cross promote and try to work with other local people," he said.

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The American Rescue Workers in Williamsport kicked off our 2025 PM Exchange Calendar on January 16th. Even with snowy conditions, members came out to enjoy a delicious spread of food and wonderful tours of the facility.

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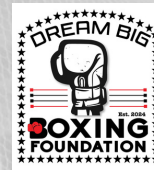
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## Upcoming PM Exchanges

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Come out to visit the Dream Big Boxing Foundation to see all that they have to offer. Guests will be treated to food and beverage as well as the opportunity to learn more about their crucial mission, which is to provide the children in our community with a place they can learn self-discipline, confidence, self-respect, courage and strength.

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Thursday, February 20 | 5-7pm  
724 Airport Road, Montoursville



Southern Airways, together with Williamsport Regional Airport Director, Richard Howell, working with a consortium of elected officials and business leaders were successful in bringing commercial air service back to Lycoming County in May of last year. That service was recently expanded in January of this year with more frequency and an optimized schedule which allows for same day out and back service from IPT Airport to our nation's capital. Southern's partnership with United and American Airlines also allows for seamless travel and through-checking of luggage to over 100 destinations around the U.S.A and around the world. Southern would like to extend our sincere thanks to Richard Howell for all his work on our behalf over the past few years and to the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber's leadership and members for their ongoing support.

Please join us for a PM Exchange to celebrate these accomplishments.



# Montoursville Chamber of Commerce END OF WINTER MIXER



## Registration & Sponsorship



TWIN MEADOWS FARM  
Wedding & Event Venue

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025  
From 5-7pm**

**Join us for food, drinks  
and live music.**



**Twin Meadows Farm  
361 Mountain Road, Montoursville**

**Let's say *Goodbye* to winter  
and *Hello* to spring!**

**Registration for this event is free to all Chamber Members!**

**Help us make this event a success with a \$200 sponsorship.**

**Your sponsorship includes:  
Company logo displayed at event  
Company logo on all event advertising**

**Phone: (570) 326-1971 FAX: (570) 321-1209 or Register Online at  
<https://business.williamsport.org/events>**

**To view a full listing of Chamber events, please visit us at  
<https://business.williamsport.org/events>**

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