

Elizabethtown Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Celebration: *Elizabethtown Rising* 2018 Keynote Address

There is a lot we can say about the way Elizabethtown is rising. We can talk about the job growth, the economic development, the new businesses, the infrastructure enhancements. We can talk about the amazing schools - from our blue ribbon award-winning elementary school, to our high school run by an administration that truly cares about their students, to Elizabethtown College widely known for excellence and ingenuity. We can talk about how Elizabethtown is a great place to live at any age, with nationally renowned Masonic Village providing a beautiful place to retire.

For something to grow, it has to be planted. For something to rise, it has to be cultivated and cared for. What we're seeing happen in this area is a direct result of the work done by the businesses, thought leaders, and community groups represented in this room tonight.

Elizabethtown is rising because of you. Because of your dedication, determination, and focus. Early mornings, sleepless nights, tough calls, calculated risks, and big picture planning. And it's all working. There's a sense that we're on the cusp of something about to break wide open, a critical mass reached to drive the momentum.

If you look around our community, you see so many long-planned projects coming to fruition. Dreams of a walkable community with beautiful safe spaces, coming to life on our new pedestrian pathway designed to connect and enhance our area.

We see shining examples of a community-focused recreation culture - like our beautiful new amphitheater, our thriving Community center, the Northwest River Trail, and wonderful parks like Wolgemuth, plus amazing things to come at Old Trolley Line Park. We see Elizabethtown becoming a wedding-destination with the growth of 5-star properties like here Harvest View Barn, and the beautifully restored historic Star Barn.

Everywhere you look, great things are happening. The ever-expanding Conewago Industrial Park is home to nationally recognized names like Nordstrom who has embraced the opportunity of our infrastructure and talented local job force, creating hundreds and hundreds of quality jobs in the area. And these businesses have embraced the Elizabethtown community too, providing invaluable support for our Chamber of Commerce. We are so fortunate to have our major employers investing their time and commitment to the greater Elizabethtown business community, and we thank you.

The Chamber of Commerce too has experienced a season of growth, growth made possible by building on a strong foundation established by so many key leaders in this room tonight, and those who have gone before us - some of whom you'll hear more about during the awards program. And so many dedicated board members and active committees who volunteer their sometimes endless hours to ensure the Chamber is a welcoming place that serves its members well.

When I signed on to what many have heard me call 'my dream job', I was really struck by the shared sense of responsibility the Board of Directors has to do right by our diverse members. This is a group of thoughtful leaders on a mission to partner with our members for success.

And those two keywords: partner and success, have been the rallying cry, if you will, for our initiatives over the past year. I think we feel about a good partner the way we feel about a good friend - we want someone that cheers us on when something great happens, someone that even brags about us a little. And that's what we've tried to do more of.

This past year we've enhanced our digital platforms to really broaden our reach so we can better showcase your products and services. We strive to show you off, to help you promote you to your target audience through vehicles like social media, member spotlights and digital newsletters that link to your events or good news.

Another way to be a good partner is to be as present as possible. Through the relocation of the Chamber office to the main square, the Chamber is even more available and accessible to our members. One of the new programs Kelly is spearheading is our Business Start-Up Support group, which invites businesses to come together at a time later in the evening that accommodates family life and long start-up hours.

This program is actually inspired by the Chamber's participation in the very successful SCORE Roundtable. And big news just in, we learned that our SCORE Chapter was awarded the 2018 Chapter of the Year Award, and we're so proud of our members who helped make that happen.

I think we'd all agree that everything really is easier with a partner, and the Chamber has some great ones. Like Elizabethtown College, with who we partnered on a grant submission to Lancaster County Community Foundation's BB&T Economic Growth Fund program. Our project "Destination Etown" was selected to receive funding. This is excellent news for our members because the grant is specifically designed to help strengthen family and small-to-mid-size businesses.

This grant has allowed us to launch a new Revolving Loan Fund and marketing program designed to support and attract businesses to our area. Now the Chamber can even better showcase the economic opportunity here in Elizabethtown through videos like the one we just watched to the redevelopment of our interactive website- designed to be a key business and community resource.

A really exciting feature of our new website will be a program that connects our members with High School interns and work-study students which we're currently developing with another great partner, the Elizabethtown Area School District. Plus we want to help our members with the ever-challenging task of recruiting employees through a career portal.

Our membership numbers are rising too. There are many new faces here tonight, some behind the virtual reality cameras to the provider of the food on your table to an insurance advisor I recruited both to be in our video and a new member at the same time!

As for what lies ahead... we're just going to keep on enhancing the value of your membership, from small things like a listening ear when a business challenge arises to broader support like customized grant alerts and business planning resources. We are your partner. We root for your success, and want to help you reach your business goals so that you can reach your life goals - the really good stuff - like being here, among friends all working together bring out the best in each other in and in our town.