

BUCKS COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

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New Jersey motorcoach tour and travel industry calls for COVID-19 relief from federal government

Jodi Spiegel Arthur

The Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association (GNJMA) is asking the federal government to provide the motorcoach, tour and travel industry with COVID-19 stimulus funding, including \$10 billion in grants-in-aid, \$5 billion in loans and an extension of the terms in the Paycheck Protection Program.

Tim Stout, president of GNJMA and Stout's Transportation in Trenton, N.J., said the 125 state association members, most of whom are small-business owners, can't spend

the PPP money in the required eight weeks because they are prohibited from operating.

"I can't bring drivers back to sit around," he said, adding, "If I don't cover 75% of payroll, then it just becomes a loan. The last thing my company needs right now is more debt." Stout said an extension, allowing operators to utilize the funds through the end of the year without them turning into a loan, would help a lot of small businesses in the industry.

The state association is comprised mostly of members from New Jersey, but includes some from Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland, Stout said.

Nationwide, the motorcoach, tour and travel industry transports nearly 600 million passengers each year and contributes nearly \$101 billion in direct economic impact to the country.

In the wake of COVID-19, nearly all of the industry's 3,000 businesses have shut down, laying off almost 88,000 employees. They are expected to lose \$8 billion through August and experience many permanent closures unless the federal government intervenes.

Stout said an impact survey of the GNJMA members revealed they have experienced more than \$130 million in revenue losses thus far and operators have been forced to lay off or furlough more than 5,500 employees.

"It's pretty substantial," he said. Meanwhile airlines, airports, pub-



Kevin Lewis, a Stout's Transportation bus driver, gathers with a tour group outside a hotel in New Orleans.



Troops are transported by motorcoach.

lic transit and rail industries have received COVID-19 relief funds. "We transport just as many people as the airline industry, and the airlines got a bailout. So did Amtrak," Stout said.

According to the association, the motorcoach, tour and travel industry transports nearly 600 million passengers annually - more than Amtrak at 568 million.

"Our industry is going to be among the last to recover because we're in the business of moving groups of people," Stout said.

Association members, many of them running family businesses, provide commuter services, as well as

bus transportation for colleges and universities, churches, school trips and tour groups. "All that is shut down. We don't really see a full recovery for 12 months."

The operators also provide transportation for the Republican and Democratic conventions, and are a critical part of FEMA and state emergency response efforts to provide support and supplies, and they transport U.S. troops and their equipment for deployments and training around the country.

Stout said the state association put out a call to action to New Jersey legislators and hopes to schedule a

virtual meeting with them, in place of the meeting it usually has in person with legislators in Washington each spring.

In addition, he said, private motorcoach operators from across the country, frustrated in their efforts to obtain relief, held a "rally" yesterday in Washington, with hundreds of motorcoaches driving around with slogans on the vehicles, to demonstrate operators' need for financial assistance.

"As they get ready to develop the next CARES Act," Stout said, "our concern is really to be a part of it." jarthur@buckscountyherald.com

Hunterdon Freeholders approve grants to improve economic, business climates

Hunterdon County Freeholders, at the May 5 board meeting, approved four new economic development grants designed to improve the economic and business climates for Lambertville, Frenchtown, Milford, and Kingwood Township, N.J.

"The municipal grant program has been in a place for over two years now and is designed to help county towns prepare for their future economic success," said Freeholder Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren, "There's no better time to be doing that than

now." The grants to Lambertville and Milford will allow both to contract with planning consultants to undergo ordinance reviews to make the process for business growth less cumbersome. Lambertville also intends to solicit feedback directly from business owners in a series of in-person and online roundtables.

Along with the ordinance review, Milford will utilize the grant to work with planners to expand the borough's business district, to allow for more

business opportunities and potentially increase local investment.

"Milford has been on the cusp of an economic revival and we don't plan to let current circumstances alter that," said Milford Mayor Henri Schepens. "This project helps us continue to set the stage for success."

As Lambertville and Milford intend to do, Frenchtown has already used the county's grant program to implement ordinance and procedural changes in the borough. The new grant will now fund work with a vendor to provide

online access to the borough's municipal code. This project will result in all laws, regulations, and related documents being easily searched and located by the business community and the public. According to borough officials, this change will also save staff time.

Kingwood Township officials say they have big plans to market their more than 1,200 acres of parks. Among them, they will use the grant funding to work with OuterSpatial, a company that has created a platform specifically designed to help park agencies take advantage of mobile technology.

"The result will be an interactive App that will maximize the parks visibility to the public," said Kingwood Township Committee member Richard Dodds. "It's more important than

ever for Hunterdon residents to have knowledge and access to the terrific assets the township and county have to offer."

Also on the tourism front, Frenchtown officials report that they are finalizing a film ordinance to let that specific business sector know that they are "open for business."

"Tourism is a big part of Hunterdon's economy," said Freeholder Matt Holt. "It's great to see our communities embracing the industry as a part of their future success."

Holt added that Frenchtown's effort is a part of the county's FilmHunterdon initiative, aimed at attracting film and video productions to Hunterdon.

As a condition of the grant program, municipalities pay 10% of the total cost of their funded projects.

Hunterdon Freeholders call on state to allow curbside pickup for small businesses

Hunterdon County Freeholder Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren and Deputy Director Susan J. Soloway have sent a joint letter, on the behalf of the Freeholder Board, to Gov. Phil Murphy, calling for small businesses to be able to offer curbside pickup effectively immediately.

"Currently, numerous restaurants in Hunterdon County and across the State of New Jersey are offering curbside food pickup with a great deal of success. Restaurant owners have adapted their operations for the safe pick up of food and residents have responded appropriately by maintaining social distancing and wearing masks," the letter reads.

"While New Jersey continues to battle against COVID-19, many small businesses have had to shutter their doors for nearly eight weeks with no clear end date in site," Van Doren

stated. "Allowing small businesses to offer curbside pickup represents a safe and reasonable step forward in the reopening of New Jersey's economy."

"Currently, big box retailers like Wal-Mart and Target are selling many of the same goods and services offered by our small business community. We believe that small businesses in our shopping centers and downtowns deserve to be treated equitably and given the chance to compete."

The Hunterdon County Freeholder Board has heard from numerous small business owners that are concerned about their long-term economic future.

"Between delays in the processing of unemployment claims, to paperwork issues with the Paycheck Protection Program, small businesses owners, and their employees, have been particularly hard hit by this ongoing public health crisis. Many small

business owners have gone without income anywhere from six to eight weeks," said Soloway, a liaison to the county's Economic Development Office.

"We firmly believe that with guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health, small businesses will rise to the challenge and offer a safe shopping experience for their patrons."

Van Doren and Soloway both noted that time is not on the side of many small businesses and downtowns across New Jersey. Both concurred that Murphy must consider some reasonable measures to provide the opportunity to open for business sooner rather than later.

"If more time is allowed to pass, 'Out of Business' will become the new welcoming sign of downtowns across the Garden State," said Soloway.

Noteworthy

QNB Bank has promoted Gary Trively of Northampton to the position of Vice President, Branch Manager, at the bank's Westcosville office.



GARY TRIVELY

Trively is responsible for the effective management of the full-service branch. His duties include developing new business, retaining and expanding current businesses, and representing QNB through various civic and community functions. His previous position was Assistant Vice President, Branch Manager at the Westcosville office.

Trively has been with QNB for 33 years. He is a graduate of Salisbury High School and has completed numerous American Institute of Banking courses.

He is active in his community, serving as a leader of Christian education programs and consistory member at his church. He is also a board member of the East Penn Chamber of Commerce. Gary currently resides in Northampton with his family.

Chant Engineering creates new N95 mask sanitizing unit

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the shortage of N95 masks and PPE in the supply chain, Chant Engineering Co. Inc., of New Britain, has designed the Puratizer, a low-cost portable mask sanitizer unit to sanitize masks in just five minutes.

Using this unit, masks can be reused up to 10 times each. This will not only save costs on PPE purchases but will also help alleviate the current supply chain shortages.

"It's really been an amazingly crazy six weeks, from concept to prototype, to having it tested at the local hospital and now ready and in production. But that's what small businesses like ours can do," said Philip Chant, president of Chant Engineering.

"We are excited to announce the Puratizer™ LLC brand and this new, easy to operate, lightweight and compact unit that uses UVC LED technology to give masks a full coverage UVC dosage in just five minutes. The unit is fast and capable of sanitizing



Bucks County engineering firm develops new sanitizer for N95 masks.

up to 20 masks per hour," said Christi Chambers, marketing coordinator for Chant.

Puratizer products are made in Chant Engineering's New Britain facility. The Puratizer sanitizer unit weighs 7.5 pounds and is about the

size of a small overnight suitcase. It is "simple to use" and takes four "easy" steps. The Puratizer automatically stops after the five-minute sanitization cycle is over. The masks are then ready for reuse. For information, visit: puratizer.com or call 215-230-4260.

The Board of Directors of Philabundance, the 35-year-old nonprofit dedicated to ending hunger in the Delaware Valley, May 5 announced the selection of Loree D. Jones as chief executive officer.

Jones succeeds Glenn Bergman, who led the organization at the end of March after a successful tenure as executive director. She will begin her new position on June 2.

Jones, most recently the chief of staff to the chancellor of Rutgers University-Camden, has served in leadership positions in nonprofit organizations, education and city government throughout her career.

Prior to her service at Rutgers, Jones was chief of external affairs for the School District of Philadelphia. She also served as managing director for the City of Philadelphia in the John Street administration.

Her extensive nonprofit experience includes serving as co-executive director of City Year Greater Philadelphia and as executive director of the African Studies Association (ASA). She currently serves on multiple nonprofit boards of directors, including the Philadelphia Health Partnership, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the Independence Foundation.

Jones, a graduate of the Philadelphia High School for Girls, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Spelman College, where she graduated magna cum laude, and a Master of Arts degree in history from Princeton University.