

AFRICAN AMERICAN



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Monthly News & Updates

January 7, 2026 | Issue
12

▶ Business Institute Presents



BUSINESS INSTITUTE PRESENTS

Financing Real Estate and Equipment Through the SBA 504 Program Webinar

Wednesday, January 14, 2026
11:00am - 12:00pm

Join us as Steve Meredith, Business Development Officer for the Regional Development Funding Corporation discusses the SBA 504 program to purchase, improve, or construct real estate, purchase machinery or equipment with a useful life of 10 years or longer, or if you are interested in refinancing any of those assets.

[**Click here to RSVP**](#)



PowerBreakfast Meeting with The Forbes Funds

Friday, January 16, 2026
8:30am - 10:00am

Rivers Club
One Oxford Centre
301 Grant Street, Suite 411
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Join us as Fred Brown, President and CEO of The Forbes Funds, discusses how The Forbes Funds connects individuals and organizations dedicated to meaningful and transformative philanthropic efforts to the resources and capital, they need for success.

[**Click here to RSVP**](#)



BUSINESS INSTITUTE PRESENTS

Understanding Succession Planning Webinar

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

11:00am - 12:00pm

Join us for the first webinar in our three-part series featuring Orlando Houston, Managing Partner and Financial Consultant at Ohana Wealth Legacy. Orlando will cover what succession planning is, why it matters, the risks of not having a plan, common misconceptions and barriers, and an overview of key succession planning models.

[**Click here to RSVP**](#)



BUSINESS INSTITUTE PRESENTS

Building a Strong Succession Strategy Webinar

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

11:00am - 12:00pm

Join us for the second webinar in our three-part series featuring Orlando Houston, Managing Partner and Financial Consultant at Ohana Wealth Legacy. Orlando will share practical insights on identifying critical roles and future leaders, competency mapping and leadership development, key legal and financial considerations, and effective communication strategies for stakeholders.

[**Click here to RSVP**](#)



BUSINESS INSTITUTE PRESENTS

Implementing and Sustaining the Plan Webinar

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

11:00am - 12:00pm

Join us for the third and final webinar in our three-part series featuring Orlando Houston, Managing Partner and Financial Consultant at Ohana Wealth Legacy. Orlando will walk through how to implement a succession plan effectively, monitor and update it over time, manage resistance and cultural change, and use technology to support succession planning.

[**Click here to RSVP**](#)

HOLD THIS DATE

Thursday, January 15, 2026
at 10 a.m.

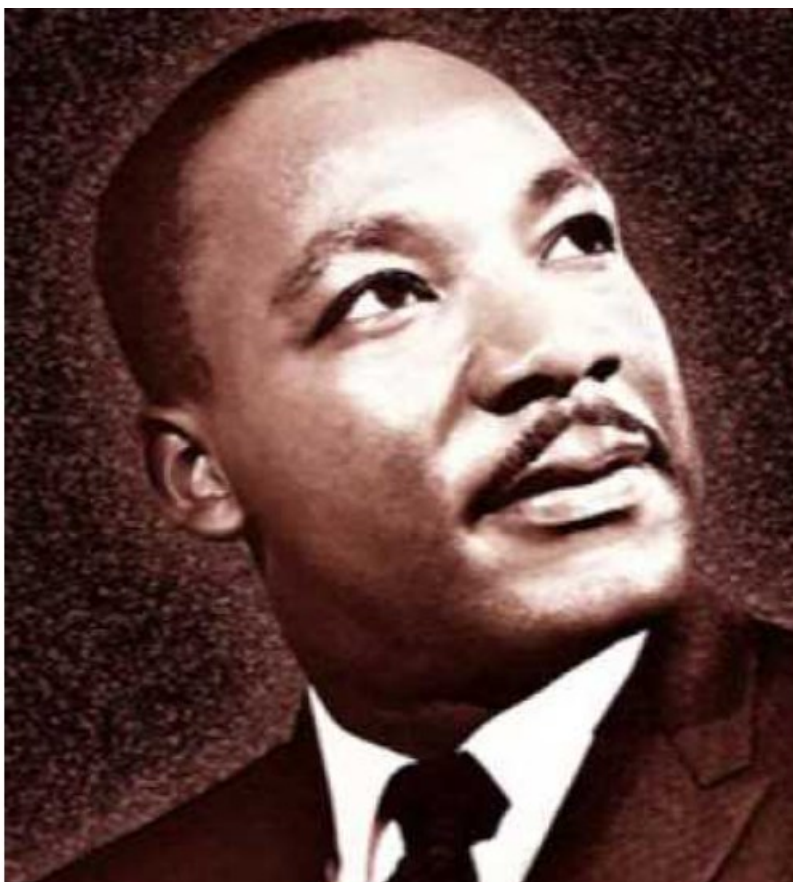
Honoring:

**Rev. Samson M. Cooper
and Wendell G. Freeland**

The 2026 ceremony will be held
in person and virtually.

Look for more details to follow.





Upcoming GACO Webinars with "Go-To-Guy" Timberlake

"Be Seen. Be Known." Strategy to Marketing: Being Visible Before Opportunities Webinar - January 27, 2026 10:00 am - 11:30 am

"Find Needs, Not Opportunities." Strategy to Business Development: Jumping to the Front of the Line Webinar - February 24, 2026 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Session 1 (January 27): "Be Seen. Be Known." Strategy to Marketing: Being Visible Before Opportunities

If your target Customers and Buyers don't know you exist, you can't win. Learn how strategic targeting creates visibility with the right people at the right agencies before they have requirements. Based on 40 years of practitioner-developed principles, this session shows why marketing matters, who to reach, and when to build awareness that positions you for opportunities.

Session 2 (February 24): "Find Needs, Not Opportunities." Strategy to Business Development: Jumping to the Front of the Line

Most companies in federal contracting neglect a key competitive differentiator: talking to Customers, not just Buyers. Everyone joins the hunt when RFIs, RFPs, or RFQs drop. The trick is knowing about Customers, their objectives, and their current and future needs before those requirements reach the contracting office. Based on 40 years of practitioner-developed principles, this session shows what information develops leads, when business development happens, and how market research positions you ahead of competitors and opportunities. That's jumping to the front of the line.

About Our Speaker

"Go-To-Guy" Timberlake is the face and voice of The American Small Business Coalition (The ASBC) and is focused on creating and facilitating programs like Ethical Stalking for Government Contractors®, which has helped and continues to help companies thrive in federal contracting by changing their mindsets and rewriting their scripts.

Session 1 - Register by January 26, 2026: <https://cupgaco.ecenterdirect.com/events/934>

Session 2 - Register by February 23, 2026: <https://cupgaco.ecenterdirect.com/events/932>

For more information, contact Valerie Kachur at kachur_v@pennwest.edu or 412-237-6098

UNDERSTANDING & OBTAINING DIVERSITY CERTIFICATIONS

ATTENTION SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

STAY CURRENT AND BE PREPARED FOR THE 2026 NFL DRAFT AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

New, existing and upcoming supplier diversity opportunities are a certification away. Check your certifications and stay current and prepared for the next big opportunity!

MBE Certification of Minority-owned Businesses (Pennsylvania - DBE Certification Management System) Go to:

paucp.dbesystem.com

WBE Certification for Women-owned Businesses (Pennsylvania - DBE Certification Management System) Go to:

paucp.dbesystem.com

MWBE Certification for Minority & Women-owned Business Enterprise (Pennsylvania - DBE Certification Management System) Go to:

paucp.dbesystem.com

DBE Certification for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (Pennsylvania - DBE Certification Management System) Go to:

paucp.dbesystem.com

WBENC Women's Business Enterprise National Council; Go to: [\[www.wbenc.org\]](http://www.wbenc.org)www.wbenc.org

NMSDC National Minority Supplier Diversity Council; Go to: [\[www.nmsdc.org\]](http://www.nmsdc.org)www.nmsdc.org

EMSDC Eastern Minority Supplier Diversity Council; Go to: emsdc.org

DGS Pennsylvania's Department of General Services; Go to: dgs.pa.gov

City of Pittsburgh; Go to: pittsburghpa.gov

Allegheny County; Go to: [\[www.alleghenycounty.us\]](http://www.alleghenycounty.us)www.alleghenycounty.us

▶ Spotlight Your Business

Spot on Business 1

Put Your Business In The Chamber's '2026 Spotlight'

Learn more about this opportunity to showcase your business by sponsoring a Chamber Business Institute Program. 2026 sponsorships are available.

Learn more at 412-392-0610 or:

▶ Share Your News

Share Your 2026 News, Events, and Hiring Opportunities

Are your sales up, have you opened a new office, are you hiring new staff members, or have an upcoming event? Your Chamber wants to share your 'Good News' with other Members in our monthly Newsletter.

email us

▶ Miscellaneous News

SCAM ALERT

If you receive an email that says the following it is a scam!

Are you interested in obtaining the latest Distribution/Members List.

- African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania 2025
- Pennsylvania, USA

This list includes 1,000+ valuable Contacts that can enhance your outreach and networking efforts.

Please let me know if you would like to proceed, and I'll share the pricing and further details.

Looking forward to your reply.

Chamber Social Media Sites

The African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania has a new social media sites.

- Please [click here](#) to follow us on Facebook!
- Please [click here](#) to follow us on Instagram



Life Camera Soul Photography

As a Cyber Monday bonus, I'm opening the final window to reserve a early 2026 portrait experience — with two intentional credits added in just for today.

Here's what you'll receive when you secure your spot:

- A guided, magazine-style portrait session
- \$395 Image Credit toward your images or collection
- Cyber Monday Bonus: \$200 Wall Art Credit
- 20% Wall Art savings activated with 2+ pieces or any Collection/Album

This bonus offer closes tonight at midnight.
If you feel pulled toward this, you can secure your experience here:

[!\[\]\(341b5bdc31177a6c7da7dc713da0d169_img.jpg\) Cyber Monday Portrait Experience](#)

For more information please reach out to Jordan Jenkins - 412-550-4748.



Sapiaientia One Global Solutions Launches:

Reimagining the Future-Driving Organizational Resilience and Transformation

As the Founder, President, and CEO of Sapiaientia One Global Solutions, Dr. Alicia B. Harvey-Smith stands at the uncommon crossroads where strategic precision meets human-centered purpose. On one side lies the world of measurable outcomes—financial forecasts, organizational performance, and operational complexity. On the other rests the deeper human dimension—resilience, belonging, and the universal pursuit of recognition and meaning. While many consultants confine themselves to one domain, Dr. Harvey-Smith has forged a bridge between both, creating pathways that unite business imperatives with human aspirations. Through this integrated approach, she has guided colleges through transformation, empowered corporations with leadership development, and equipped organizations with executive consulting and high-impact training that endures beyond metrics.

Wisdom transcends mere knowledge. In Latin, it is Sapiaientia—the cornerstone of Dr. Harvey-Smith's vision and the guiding spirit of her global enterprise. For her, wisdom is profound discernment: the ability to perceive the full architecture of a challenge while others remain distracted by surface fractures. It is the uncommon gift of linking vision to action, clarity to compassion, and solutions to sustainable impact. Within the demanding arenas of higher education and corporate leadership—where institutions often falter under demographic shifts, financial uncertainty, and organizational upheaval—Dr. Harvey-Smith affirms that wisdom is the most enduring and essential currency.

With more than three decades in executive leadership—and over fifteen years at the presidential and executive vice chancellor levels—Dr. Alicia B. Harvey-Smith has earned distinction as a transformational leader and trusted guide. Her steady leadership has steered institutions through periods of crisis, restoring resilience and charting pathways toward enduring vision and sustainable growth. Today, her influence extends well beyond the realm of academia, as she brings insight and innovation to global consulting, corporate training, and executive leadership development, equipping organizations worldwide to thrive in times of complexity and change.

Through Sapiientia One Global Solutions, Dr. Alicia B. Harvey-Smith empowers organizations to face disruption with confidence and resilience. Her executive development programs and keynote addresses inspire leaders to move beyond mere survival and embrace true transformation—to read spreadsheets and recognize the lives they represent, to redefine success not only in terms of profit but in the lasting impact created for people and communities.

Sapiientia One Global Solutions reimagines consulting as far more than the resolution of challenges. It stands as a catalyst for strategic innovation, a force for leadership empowerment, and a driver of global transformation—uniting higher education, corporate enterprise, and international communities with frameworks and tools designed to spark enduring change.

Times CEO is honored to feature Dr. Alicia B. Harvey-Smith, Founder, President, and CEO of Sapientia One Global Solutions, as she provides thoughtful responses to key questions on leadership, institutional transformation, and global consulting. Her insights reflect the wisdom at the core of Sapientia and the vision that continues to inspire organizations worldwide.

To read the full Dr. Alicia B. Harvey-Smith interview [click here](#).

Why Employees Don't Understand Their Benefits...And How Employers Can Fix It

For many mid-sized employers, one of the most overlooked challenges in their benefits strategy is also one of the most costly: employees simply don't understand their benefits. Studies consistently show that fewer than 40% of employees feel confident selecting or using their health plan. For smaller and mid-sized organizations where every dollar of premium matters, benefits confusion can directly translate into higher claims, lower engagement, and diminished ROI.

The root problem is not a lack of benefits options, but a lack of clarity. Employees are overwhelmed by insurance jargon, complex plan structures, and enrollment materials that feel more like legal documents than decision-making tools. As a result, many default to the same plan every year without evaluating alternatives that might save them (and the company) money.

The path forward starts with implication and education. Mid-sized employers can make a significant impact by redesigning communication around how people actually learn. This includes using plain-language explanations, visual comparisons, and short videos that break down key concepts like deductibles, HSAs, out-of-pocket maximums, and provider networks. Digital decision-support tools can help employees model costs in real time, so they can see the financial impact of their choices...not just read about it.

Equally important is year-round communication. Benefits literacy shouldn't be a once-a-year event. Quarterly micro-topics, such as preventive care reminders, urgent care vs. ER guidance, and HSA contributions strategies, keep employees engaged and avoid costly misuse of the plan.

Finally, personalized guidance can make a measurable difference. Offering short "benefits coaching sessions" during open enrollment or making HR and brokers available for talk-throughs helps employees feel supported, not overwhelmed.

When employees understand their benefits, they make smarter healthcare decisions, help control claim costs, and feel more valued. For mid-sized employers, improving benefits literacy is one of the most effective, and low-cost ways to strengthen retention, culture, and financial performance. The African American Chamber of Commerce offers its members access to My Benefit Advisor as a solution for employee benefits, including voluntary offerings. For more information about My Benefit Advisor, visit our website at aacc.mybenefitadvisor.com or contact Craig Pritts at (800) 377-



In the New Pittsburgh Courier

Congratulations to member Pittsburgh Public Schools for their grand opening of its groundbreaking "Emerging Educators" Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.

Congratulations to members Kelley Benson, Yolanda Rodgers Howsie, and Simone McMeans for being a 2025 Women of Excellence honoree.

Congratulations to member Hill District Federal Credit Union for their successful Annual Meeting.

Congratulations to member Dr. Lawrence Gipson for being the "2025 Lifetime Achievement" awardee and member Marcia Sturdivant for being the "2025 Making a Difference" awardee from the Gateway Medical Society.

Congratulations to Corporate Sponsor Citizens, Tammy Spencer Bey, for being a judge on a panel for the Bible Center Church's Oasis Project that awarded a \$10,000 business grant.

Congratulations the member Boys and Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania for opening a teen center Downtown, open Monday - Thursday 3:00pm - 8:00pm.

Congratulations to member August Wilson African American Cultural Center for their successful "Fuel the Future: Take Center Stage!" event.

Congratulations to member Doris Carson Williams for being recognized as a prominent African American and receive a "Key to the City".

In the Pittsburgh Business Times

Congratulations to Corporate Sponsor Citizens for their rebuilt East Liberty site.

Thank you to member Allegheny County Airport Authority, Christina Cassotis for her conversation about the new Pittsburgh International Airport.

Congratulations to U.S. Steel Corporation for their plans on building a new "Hot Strip Mill" at the Edgar Thomson plant in Braddock.

Congratulations to Corporate Sponsor Dollar Bank and member Solutions4Networks for being a 2025 Fast 50 award winner.

Congratulations to Corporate Sponsor Quinton Bullock for being a panelist for the Workforce Development Breakfast, and member Rob Cherry for being the moderator for the Workforce Development Breakfast.

Congratulations to member Allegheny County Airport Authority, Christina Cassotis, for opening their new Pittsburgh International Airport.

Thank you to Mark Sevco, President of Allegheny Health Network, for his insightful interview about his journey and how he decided to come back to Pittsburgh.

Thank you to Quinton Bullock, President of Community College of Allegheny County, for his insightful interview about CCAC.

Thank you to Rob Cherry, CEO of Partner4Work, for his insightful interview about the challenges and successes in his role.

Congratulations to member Goodwill for opening the largest Goodwill store in the Pittsburgh Region.

In the TEQ Magazine

Congratulations to member Michele McGough for being awarded the Solutions Provider of the Year, Culture Leader of the Year, and CEO of the Year for the Pittsburgh Technology Council's prestigious Tech 50 Awards.

Career Opportunities

Pittsburgh Regional Transit

Seeking an Assistant Director of Maintenance and Service to during off shift periods, assists in managing, coordinating, and monitoring fleet maintenance, service delivery and administration activities for Port Authority of Allegheny County d/b/a Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) to ensure safe and reliable fleet operations. Assists with the development and implementation of maintenance work standards. Assists in implementing and monitoring standardized administrative programs and maintenance activities and procedures around service goals and performance standards. Implements maintenance programs to maintain the fleet, facility and support equipment and coordinates subcontracted maintenance work. Coordinates technical instruction provided to employees and ensures safe work practices are followed. Conducts investigations and hearings regarding accidents and workplace injuries and supervises the allocation of resources for maintenance activities.

Essential Functions:

- May maintain a revenue service vehicle or equipment used in revenue service.
- Supervises and coordinates the daily activities of supervisors and administrative support employees involved in maintaining, repairing, and servicing the fleet. Supervises and coordinates the daily activities of employees involved with fleet maintenance and repair, fleet interior and exterior cleaning, assignment of fleet to routes, and maintenance of auxiliary head signs.
- Assists in implementing and monitoring standardized administrative programs and maintenance activities and procedures. Works with Manager of Maintenance & Service to develop and implement service goals and maintenance performance standards in support of PRT's goals, objectives, and mission.

Job requirements include:

- High school diploma or GED.
- Associate's degree or two (2) years of college in transportation, business, vehicle maintenance or related field from an accredited college or university. Related experience may be substituted for education on a year-for-year basis.
- Three (3) years' experience in vehicle maintenance and supervisory experience. No certifications or licenses required.
- Minimum of two (2) years supervisory experience.
- Demonstrated ability in the use of Windows.
- Effective and professional communication skills.
- Ability to work all shifts as assigned by the Manager of Maintenance and Service.
- Valid PA Driver's License.

Preferred attributes:

- Bachelor's degree in business or related field from an accredited college or university.
- Valid Commercial Driver's License (Class B), with P endorsement.
- Experience in statistical process control.
- Demonstrated ability in the use of Microsoft Word and Access.

Annual Salary \$78,300 - \$117,400

We offer a comprehensive compensation and benefits package. Interested candidates should forward a cover letter (with salary requirements) and resume to:

Holly A. Jenkins
Employment Department
345 Sixth Avenue, 3rd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-2527
HJenkins@RidePRT.org

Seeking a Digital Communications Specialist to plan, create and execute integrated social media communications. Develops original engaging visual (photo/video) and written content tailored for multiple platforms including Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok, X/Twitter, and YouTube. Stays informed on current trends, memes, and digital culture to increase visibility, reach, and engagement. Manages PRT social media accounts, including daily posting, paid and organic campaigns, real-time monitoring, and community interaction. Monitors analytics and key performance indicators to inform strategy and optimize results while ensuring brand voice consistency and responsible use of humor and tone. Maintains and updates content through the agency's Content Management System (CMS).

Essential Functions:

- Creates and publishes multimedia content—including videos, photography, graphics, and written posts highlighting the organization.
- Writes and edits original digital copy for web, campaigns, and social media, optimized for tone, readability, and search engine optimization.
- Provides photo and video production support, including fieldwork at events and customer engagement activities.
- Manages daily social media operations and budget. This includes posting, monitoring, analyzing campaign performance and managing paid social media campaigns.

Job requirements include:

- Bachelor's degree in public relations, communications, journalism, marketing, or related field from an accredited college or university. Related experience may be substituted for education on a year-for-year basis.
- Minimum of one year experience in communications, marketing, social media, website content design or a related field.
- Experience creating multimedia content (e.g., photo, video, reels, stories, graphics) for social media platforms.
- Experience growing and engaging followers on organizational or brand accounts.
- Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing.

- Demonstrated ability in the use of Microsoft Windows, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

Preferred attributes:

- Computer testing Microsoft Windows Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

Annual Salary \$57,200 - \$85,900

We offer a comprehensive compensation and benefits package. Interested candidates should forward a cover letter (with salary requirements) and resume to:

Danielle Jacobson
Employment Department
345 Sixth Avenue, 3rd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-2527
DJacobson@RidePRT.org

▶ FYI



The NFL has listed their opportunities to do business. Please click this link in order to submit a form of interest <https://2026nfldraftsuppliers.com/>. Please scroll to the bottom of the page a click submit an interest form.

FYI

Interested in Business Property in Allegheny County? Learn about property for sale in Allegheny County, property taxes, and property assessments. Go to: **realestate.alleghenycounty.us**

Did You Know

The upcoming 2026 NFL Draft in Pittsburgh is just over 100 days away. Get updates and learn about the activities planned for the 2026 NFL Draft at www.visitpittsburgh.com



New Members

REGULAR MEMBERS

JoVonna Grayson-Kirkland

InterConnect Techs

<https://interconnecttechs.com/>

Carol Fisher

Dance on the Go, LLC

<https://www.danceonthegollc.com/>

Cindy Underwood

C&J Financial Foundations, LLC

<https://candjfinfoundations.com/>

CHAIRMAN CIRCLE MEMBERS

Dennis Briggs

D Briggs Transport LLC

<https://www.briggstransportationpgh.com/>

Is your Chamber Membership up for renewal?

Renew Your Membership Now at:

information@aaccwp.com



412.392.0610