

HCBI Appoints New Management

By JOSH FUNK

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Huntingdon County Business and Industry has officially named a new executive director and director of business outreach.

Amy Sheaffer-Wise, formerly HCBI's director of business development, will take over as executive director at the beginning of the new year. Susanne House will begin as HCBI's director of business outreach at the start of the new year. House held the title of director of business outreach for the last two years with the Juniata College Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership (JCEL).

The staff announcements were presented before the closing of the public session of HCBI's monthly business meeting Monday at the Huntingdon Country Club.

The "new" HCBI administrative appointments come a little less than a month after the blessing was given from Huntingdon County Commissioners and Juniata College to transfer management duties and oversight of the Huntingdon County Enterprise Zone program from JCEL to HCBI.

Both Sheaffer-Wise and House stressed even though there are changes in their titles, services will still remain the same and clients are still encouraged to visit the Sill Business Incubator, 419 14th St., Huntingdon.

"Our services won't change at all for our clients," House said.

"We'll work with any size of business, from entrepreneurs to the Bonney Forgers," Sheaffer-Wise said.

Sheaffer-Wise began with HCBI in November 2007 as the organization's director of business development. In 2008, she added the responsibility of helping to oversee the Keystone Innovation Zone and Keystone Opportunity Zone programs.

Even though she'll be wearing the hat of executive director now, Sheaffer-Wise said she will continue to oversee the Innovation Zone and Opportunity Zone programs.

"Susanne and I both will continue to maintain many of our current responsibilities," Sheaffer-Wise said. "My newest responsibility will be to serve as staff liaison to HCBI's Ways and Means Committee, as well as identifying and applying for grants (specifically identifying non-government sources of funding)."

Part of the reason private funding sources are being examined stems from cuts in state funding.

"I also really want to pick the brains of my (economic development) counterparts in other counties to see how they are weathering the storm (of the present economy)," Sheaffer-Wise said, adding she is excited about the new responsibilities and "welcomes the challenge."

During her time with HCBI, Sheaffer-Wise has also been involved with help in Route 22 joint task force endeavors (involving Huntingdon, Blair and Mifflin counties), helping work with the Riverview Business Center and sales of Lots 1 and 10 there, as well as numerous individual

projects, Partners for Economic Progress and strengthening partnerships with the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau and Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce.

House began working with JCEL in July 2006 as the assistant director. In January 2008, her title transitioned to director of business outreach for JCEL. Now, come Jan.1, House will take her present title and transition from JCEL to HCBI.

Beyond coordinating the county's enterprise zone program, House also oversees three revolving loan funds- the Small Business Development Revolving Loan Fund, the Business and Infrastructure Development Revolving Loan Fund and the Enterprise Zone Revolving Loan Fund.

The EZ loan fund has been the most popular of the three programs. Since April 2007, House has helped execute 12 revolving loans to businesses and currently has two applications pending. The EZ loan program has brought back between \$400,000 to \$500,000 dollars to its account over the course of the last few years.

"That's kind of been my baby since I arrived," House said.

House will also oversee many responsibilities pertaining to membership services for HCBI.

During her time with JCEL, House has served in various other capacities. She has been secretary of the HCVB board since 2007, a board member of the Business Advisory Committee in the Southern Huntingdon County School District and also has taught Junior Achievement classes as part of the "Be Entrepreneurial" program at Mount Union Area and Juniata Valley high schools.