



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE COUNTY MANUFACTURERS HOST SBA TOURS

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County’s manufacturing sector took center stage in March as the Fayette Chamber of Commerce hosted a strategic tour with leadership from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), showcasing the region’s industrial capabilities and growth potential.

Pittsburgh District Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Jim Spencer and Pittsburgh District Deputy Director Angela Marschik toured Shaffer’s Fabricating, Inc., in Uniontown and Heartland Fabrication, LLC in Brownsville to find out more about each business, as well as what role the SBA potentially could play in helping them to grow. The tour provided SBA leadership with a firsthand look at local manufacturing operations and created an opportunity to explore how federal resources can support continued expansion in Fayette County.

Coordinated by the Fayette Chamber, the visit reflects a broader strategy to connect local employers with state and federal partners, ensuring Fayette County businesses are positioned to access capital, supply chain opportunities, and workforce support.

“The Fayette Chamber is proud to serve as a connector between our business community and key partners like the SBA,” said Muriel Nuttall, Chamber Executive Director. “These conversations are critical as we work to strengthen our manufacturing base, support business expansion, and position Fayette County for long-term economic growth.”

“I love going to small businesses,” Spencer said. “They are the backbone of the local economy.”

Spencer noted he frequently embarks on these types of tours, looking for ways in which the SBA can serve as a “matchmaker,” helping to strike a mutually beneficial deal between two businesses.

“A lot of times, we’re looking for a small company to be a supplier,” Spencer said. “The more we understand their capabilities, the more we can help in the matchmaking part.”

Spencer said during these tours, SBA representatives have a chance to make a list of the small businesses’ needs and gain a better understanding of the business as a whole. That way, for instance, if the business is looking to expand or seeking capital, “we’re helping to maybe connect the dots” with a resource who can provide help.

Spencer said prior to the tours that he was “very eager to see both,” and representatives from both businesses said the tours were productive.

“It went really well. They were there for hours, and we had a lot of good conversations. It was a good visit, I think,” Shaffer’s Fabricating CEO Bill Shaffer Jr. said.

Shaffer described Spencer as “helpful. It seemed like he cared, and he wanted to be involved.”

Shaffer’s Fabricating primarily manufactures heavy industrial equipment for the mining industry, while Heartland Fabrication specializes in barge construction.

Heartland’s president and COO, Ted Stilgenbauer, called the visit “a tremendous success” and said SBA members “consistently asked insightful questions about our production processes and strategic goals, demonstrating their keen interest in the workings of our operation. The group was able to tour nearly every part of our facility, observing firsthand the transformation from raw steel to a completed barge ready for launch. Along the way, they witnessed the dedication and hard work that our shop floor team pours into every barge we build.”

Stilgenbauer said Spencer “stood out as especially interested in both our processes and our industry. We were able to address many of his questions, both on a high-level and at the shop floor level, which led to some very constructive conversations about future partnership opportunities.”

Both businesses emphasized growth opportunities ahead, while also noting challenges such as workforce availability and capacity constraints.

Shaffer said his business is “in a phase right now where we’re pretty much out of room and turning down work because we can’t handle anymore.” Both he and Stilgenbauer said they look forward to further conversations with SBA representatives and finding out how the organization can help them, as well as manufacturing in Fayette County as a whole.

Despite these challenges, both leaders expressed strong optimism about the future of manufacturing in Fayette County.

“The future is and can be great. There’s nothing but potential there,” he said. “I think it can be great if we all pull together.”

Stilgenbauer agreed and added Heartland looks forward to playing a part in that future.

“Fayette County is on the brink of becoming a significant manufacturing hub. Heartland Fabrication is committed to leading this manufacturing boom, and we are laying the groundwork to build a sustainable and powerful sector centered right here in town,” he said. “We believe that the people of Fayette County will soon feel the positive economic impact, as our operation is better positioned for success than ever before. The momentum is just beginning, and we’re proud to play a central role in shaping the area’s manufacturing landscape.”

Spencer agreed, reinforcing the SBA’s commitment to supporting that growth.

“I think the sky’s the limit for that county in growing manufacturing,” he said, adding the SBA wants to help in whatever way it can. “We want to support that community and grow manufacturing jobs in that county.”

The Fayette Chamber will continue working with partners at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure Fayette County businesses have the tools, connections, and resources needed to grow and compete in today’s economy.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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For more information, contact Rick Fike, Director of Discover Fayette & Fayette TV, at 724-437-4571, rfike@fayettecountypa.info or Jamie Rankin, Journalist, at 724-437-4571, jamierankin13@gmail.com.