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Assessors' Association of Pennsylvania

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CCAP County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

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New Feature - County Corner!*

Tamra Forgan, Chief Assessor, Cambria County

* ***County Corner*** *is a new feature for the AAP Journal. We are planning to highlight one or two counties per issue. If you are interested in writing a short article on your county, please contact Larry Shubert, the AAP*



A still from the Academy Award-winning film, "The Johnstown Flood," which is now shown in hi-def format with captions.

Cambria County was formed in 1804 from Huntingdon and Somerset counties. Our most recent claim to fame was winning the title of "2015 Kraft Hockeyville USA," in a contest held throughout the nation. Cambria has a strong passion for hockey, having been a part of the inspiration for the movie "Slap Shot." Two actors also come to mind as well. Cambria County native actress Carroll Baker was in "Giant" with Elizabeth Taylor and James Dean and was noted as a dramatic actress and sex symbol. She was also photographed and filmed by Andy Warhol. Actor Charles Bronson starred in many a movie and action-packed films including the Death Wish series.

Cambria has also had three significant floods. The Great Johnstown Flood of 1889 is remembered as the worst disaster by dam failure in American history. The above picture shows the devastation in the aftermath of the flood. In fact, it was the greatest single-day civilian loss of life in this country before September 11, 2001. Clara Barton arrived with the Red Cross for the first major peacetime relief effort. The other floods from rain overloading the drainage and river systems were in 1936 and 1977. I myself went to pick up my first car during the last flood and I was allowed to pass into the area because I was still on the upper side of the major destruction. The macadam was rolled up like huge jelly rolls. I arrived at the dealership to find the windows washed away and debris throughout the building except for one higher area in the back where they had moved my car and set it up on blocks, untouched.

Although the heyday of steel in Johnstown is long gone, many relics of those days are utilized today for recreation. We are home of the steepest vehicular incline in the world still in use today. Railroads that once carried coal have now become the Ghost Town Trail. We have two state parks, one of which has a 70 mile hiking trail from the Conemaugh Gorge to the Youghiogheny River in Fayette County. The county also has a rather extensive roster of immigrant families and people who came into the area in the records department.

Our next **County Corner** feature, Carbon County, is on Page 4.

Ideas for You

HOW MILLENNIALS FIND REMARKABLE SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Millenials are incredibly driven, and they're not necessarily motivated by career advancement or monetary gains.

We've all heard the long spiel about Millennials. They're supposed to be lazy, self-absorbed, and apathetic. They don't appreciate the generations that have come before them. They are, essentially, selfie-taking and unmotivated individuals--ones who would rather put themselves before everyone else.

What they don't know about Millennials, however, is that that they are incredibly driven. They're not necessarily motivated by career advancement or monetary gains, but rather by "personal values and aspirations," a study by Bentley University reports.

Millennials have a different set of goals. We just have to keep in mind that they're not the same as those of the previous generation, as we learn how to make those goals work in an office setting.

Creativity is key when it comes to pleasing Millennials. They love having their minds stimulated with problems to solve, pieces to design, and routes to plan. Confronting a challenge and being forced to rise above it takes a certain amount of innovation.

What's Inside

President's Message, County Corner (Cambria and Carbon), State Budget Update, AAP People

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President's Message

Summer, wait, please, don't go! We're sorry you felt neglected and unappreciated. We should have given you more time. It's just that this thing called "work" keeps getting in the way of our time together. Please don't send Old Man Winter - he is so cold and miserable! We will miss you and long for your return!

Anyway, hello - all you CPE's across this beautiful Keystone state. I hope you all have been able to enjoy your summer. I got my toes in the water and #$$ in the sand. It may have been only one day, but it cleared my head and my soul.

Now reality sets in as we approach tax claim upset sales and tax assessment appeals. Do you ever wonder where these people come from? For those of you who don't have the "pleasure" of dealing with delinquent tax payers, you don't know what you're missing - the gloom and despair is agony to hear every day, but some of the excuses are unique! From being in jail or on their death bed to "I didn't know I had taxes due." Really? And then we have the appellants. You know, the ones that know all about market value, neighborhooding, what properties are worth based on Zillow, oh, and of course, the experts on the income approach because they know Wal-Mart should be paying more because they are making so much money off of all of us! Because that's what the income approach is, right, Randy Waggoner?!

How can I not mention our bosses - the county commissioners? Being the Queen of the AAP means receiving a special invitation to the CCAP Annual Conference; this year's conference was in Pittsburgh at the Omni, a very beautiful hotel. I got all my coaches (thank you to Joan, Randy, JR and Lisa) to advise me on how to handle the taxation committee meeting. They didn't tell me, and I didn't think about the fact that I was going to be in a room full of politicians. Need I say more? I so needed my crown that day! I will say the meetings and the conference was ... different. Maybe this small town girl was just overwhelmed in the big city but I will say I now have a deeper appreciation for our AAP Conferences. Assessors are way more fun!

Since I doubt there's a way to get summer back, we have to find some positive points about the approaching fall and winter. Take some time to appreciate the beauty of the autumn leaves, the cool nights and the World Series. Let's go Bucs! Then we can move on to the holidays with family and friends, deer season, football and shoveling snow!

As your Queen, I am requesting your presence at the Fall Conference at the Omni Bedford Springs. I'm going to work with the Spring's staff to see if we can get that ghost hunt - our immediate past president's request. I'm also working on some inside activities for those of you who aren't into the "Dare to be Scared."

Remember…take a little time for yourself everyday…you deserve it!

Peace to all!

Your Highness,

Melissa
Melissa Border, AAP President (The Queen)



REPUBLICANS INTRODUCE STOPGAP BUDGET

CCAP Legislative Bulletin
September 18, 2015

With little movement on the state budget, there's not too much to report at this time. Our regular Legislative Update column will resume for the Winter 2016 AAP Journal!

As discussions continue regarding the FY 2015-2016 state budget, Republican lawmakers are looking at other options to release state monies during the impasse, including a short-term stopgap budget. In August, the House attempted to override 20 of the line items in the vetoed HB 1192, all of which failed to achieve the necessary 2/3 majority for approval. The Senate then announced that it would return to session Sept. 16, a week earlier than originally planned, to consider several bills that would provide four months of stopgap funding.

The stopgap measure, SB 1000, generally funds all line items in the state's General Fund at about 33 percent (a few are funded higher, including children and youth at about 50 percent), and would allow 100 percent of federal funds and state funds from dedicated sources, such as the Lottery Fund, to flow through. On Sept. 16, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted to report SB 1000, along party lines, with Republicans voting in favor and Democrats voting against. The committee also reported SB 1001, Fiscal Code amendments to implement the stopgap budget, along the same party line vote.

Unlike the House attempts to override line items in the vetoed HB 1192, the stopgap bills would need to be approved by simple majority in both chambers, then signed into law by the Governor like a traditional state budget. At the time the Bulletin went to press, the Senate was expected to bring SB 1000 and SB 1001 up for a final floor vote on Sept. 18, with the House expected to consider the bills the week of Sept. 21. However, Gov. Wolf has indicated that he would veto these stopgap budget bills.

In the meantime, Gov. Wolf rejected a late August counter-proposal offered by Republican legislative leaders to provide the full $400 million in basic education funding sought by the Governor, in return for changes they are seeking to the state and public school pension systems. The Governor in turn has offered his own counter-proposals to privatize wine and liquor sales by hiring a private manager to run the state system and to add a 401(k) component to the traditional pension benefit for future school and state employees. In exchange, the Governor is seeking the tax increases requested in his March proposal intended to address a long-term budget deficit and provide school property tax relief.

Counties remain committed to assuring that the commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens continue to receive critical human services during the budget impasse and are seeking appropriate state funding for these shared obligations. CCAP has been documenting the impacts of delayed state payments and resulting cash flow issues, which is available on the Budget News and Updates page of www.pacounties.org. Counties also continue to advocate for critical priorities, including taking any proposed rebalancing related to child welfare lines off the table and beginning a three-year restoration, consistent with the Governor's budget proposal, of the ten percent reduction to the seven line items that are part of the Human Services Block Grant and affect core services across all 67 counties.

Follow CCAP on Twitter

Follow CCAP's government relations team (@PACountiesGR) on Twitter for real-time updates on the budget and legislative affairs.

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Article submissions are welcome.
Please send to:
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County Corner!*

Kim Steigerwalt, Chief Assessor, Carbon County

Carbon County was formed in 1843 from portions of Northampton and Monroe counties. It was named for the rich and plentiful reserves of anthracite coal found in the region. The Switchback Gravity Railroad was built in 1827 to transport the coal from Summit Hill to Mauch Chunk (now known as Jim Thorpe). After it was abandoned as a primary freight railroad, it became a tourist attraction and thrill seekers rode it over the next five decades. It was considered the world's first roller coaster!

Jim Thorpe, named after the famous Native American athlete, is the county seat. While visiting Jim Thorpe, you can shop the historic downtown with its unique shops and eateries or enjoy a scenic train ride. Take a tour of the Asa Packer Mansion. Asa Packer was a pioneer in railroad construction and founded Lehigh University. The town also offers tours of St. Mark's Episcopal Church and the Old County Jail where you can view the mysterious handprint thought to be that of Alexander Campbell a coal miner and one of the Molly McGuire's who was hung in 1877 and proclaimed his innocence by placing his handprint on the wall and stating that the handprint will remain forever as proof of his innocence. The handprint remains today even though there have been attempts to erase it by washing, painting and even taking down part of the wall and replastering it.

Carbon County is known for its scenic mountains and rivers. Over two-thirds of the county is state game and state park lands where you can enjoy many recreational activities such as fishing hunting, rafting, camping, and many others too numerous to mention. Mauch Chunk Lake Park is a county-owned park where you can camp, swim, picnic, fish, and boat or just relax. Winter athletes can enjoy downhill skiing, cross country skiing, snowboarding, and tubing at the ski resorts in the area. Breathtaking views can be seen at various locations in the county - Penn's Peak has a 50 mile view of the Appalachian Mountains; Flagstaff Mountaintop has a picturesque view of Jim Thorpe; and, just down the road is a breathtaking 100 mile view of the southern side of the mountain.

Half-Price IAAO Membership Ends December 31, 2015

IAAO offers half off membership discounts to new members (or to former members who have lapsed for at least two years). This discount ends **December 31, 2015**. Also, if you join in the fourth quarter (October - December), new members can get up to three months of membership for FREE! Don't delay in taking advantage of this incredible offer!

Remember: You must write the name of one of the AAP's IAAO reps in the referral section of the special half-price membership application for new members to get this incredible deal. Our reps are **JR Hardester**, Lawrence County, and **Joan Righter Price**, Montgomery County.

We will also have applications available at the AAP Fall Conference, November 5-6 at the Omni Bedford Springs.

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AAP People & Chapter News

South Central Chapter

The South Central Chapter meets quarterly in March, June, September and December, beginning with the business meetings at 9 a.m., with seminars immediately after the meeting and are held at the Adams County Agricultural and Natural Resources Center in Gettysburg. Please contact Barb Walter at (717) 337-9837 for more information. The next meeting will be on December 4.

Allegheny County

Best wishes to Allegheny County Valuation Analyst **John Puc** and assessors **Kim Carns** and **Mike Powers** who retired after many years of service. Congratulations to all!

Bradford County

Field Investigator, **Melinda Brubaker,** retired after more than 25 years with the county. Congratulations, Melinda!

Dauphin County

Good luck to appraiser **Jay Skaggs** who moved with his family to the Lakeland, Florida area. We wish Jay well!

Lancaster County

Congratulations to **Pat Atkins**, the county's newest CPE!

Lycoming County

Chief Assessor, **Cassandra Tompkins**, recently retired and is moving to warmer climates! **Brooke Wright** has been appointed as the new Chief Assessor. Congratulations to both Cassie and Brooke!

Northumberland County

Chief Assessor **Albert Bressi** retired with his wife Diane, and they plan to travel and redecorate their house. Al was also an active member of the AAP Board of Governors. He turned 65 on August 30! Enjoy retirement, Al!

Tiffany Kaseman has been appointed as the new Chief Assessor. Congratulations, Al and Tiffany

Sullivan County

Susan McCarty became a first-time grandmother on June 10 when her daughter gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Wesley Joseph, who weighed 8lbs 5 oz and was 20 ½" long.

Union County

George Zeyn, Chief Assessor, retired from September 1 after many years of service to the county and the AAP Board of Governors. Enjoy your retirement, George!
Congratulations to **Roxy Carl** for earning her CPE!

York County

Welcome to the county's newest residential assessor, **Kate Snyder**.
Congratulations to assessor **Christine Jean** and family on the birth of a granddaughter, Emma Rose.

STEB

John Greenfield has retired as a Real Estate Evaluation Specialist for the Tax Equalization Division of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development.

Send Your Chapter/County News!

Don't forget to send your county or chapter news for the next *AAP Journal.* Our next deadline is **December 6**.
Please send your news to **Terry Cochran** at *tcochran@pacounties.org.*

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Brooke Wright

Chief Assessor

Lycoming County

Years in assessment field: 19 years

Marital Status and family: Married for 7 years. I have a daughter from my first marriage. Her name is Zoey and she is 13 going on 16 and giving me more gray hair! I also have a stepdaughter, Katlyn, a stepson, Kevin and two stepgrandchildren, Kaydence and Kennedy

What irritates me most in the assessment business: People who come in to appeal saying they want to appeal their taxes. They have no idea what assessed value means. When you tell them they are appealing the assessed value, not their taxes, they still say, "My taxes are too high!"

Most people would be surprised to know: I shoot pool for a mixed pool league and a women's pool league. I also wear two hearing aids; I was born with nerve damage or it came from high fevers when I was a baby. The doctors were never really sure how it happened.

Biggest challenge as an assessor: Filling Cassie Tompkins shoes. I have a mantra - WWCD (What Would Cassie Do?)

First Job: Working at a library when I was in high school.

If I couldn't be an assessor, I'd be: Working in a bookstore. I love to read!

If I won millions in the lottery, I would: Give my resignation immediately! Take the family on a trip and set up college funds for my daughter and grandchildren.

Favorite food and drink: Twisted teas and wine and my husband's hamburgers on the grill. I only get them in the summer, since he refuses to stand outside in the winter and cook them for me!

Favorite vacation: Going to California to visit family. It's a beautiful state but I would not want to live there and try to drive in that traffic!

Favorite movie: Remember the Titans

Three people living or dead that I would invite to dinner: My sister Teresa who died a year and a half ago. Cassie Tompkins - I miss seeing her every day. .

The hardest lesson I ever learned as an assessor was the time: Even though the value should have been what our office determined it to be due to the comps that we had, the Board thought it should be lower, so they lowered it. Then a year later the property sold for around what our value was. Lesson - the commissioners do what they want.

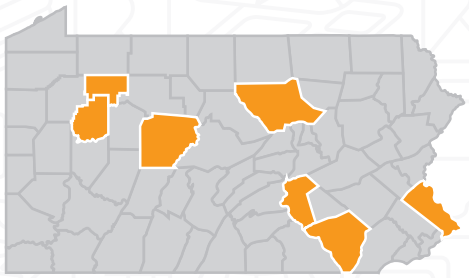
If I could live in the past for one day, I would change... Nothing. Where I am in my life, I would not be here, if I hadn't gone through what life has thrown at me.

My best friend: Linda Marcusky. My birthday is February 1 and Linda's is February 2. She is always there for me and makes me laugh when I have a bad day, especially at work!

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ASSESSORS' ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA

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2015-16 Education Calendar *

AAP Fall 2015 Conference
November 5 – 6, 2015, Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford

CPE Review Course - CCAP, Harrisburg, PA
November 30 – December 2, 2015

Spring 2016 CPE Classes - CCAP Office, Harrisburg
Intro - March 7 – 11
Site/Market - March 15 – 18
Cost - April 4 – 8
Income - April 12 – 15

2016 AAP Annual Conference
May 4 - 6, Hilton Harrisburg, Harrisburg

Fall 2016 CPE Classes - Ramada Inn, State College
Intro - September 19 – 23
Site/Market - September 27 – 30
Cost - October 3 – 7
Income - October 11 – 14

** Check the AAP website, www.paassessors.org, for more details.*

Ideas for You - continued from page 1

MILLENNIALS

Consulting firms are on the rise; design is the new big extracurricular. Being paid to solve problems has never appealed so much to a generation before this one. We should take advantage of it.

Consulting firms are on the rise; design is the new big extracurricular. Being paid to solve problems has never appealed so much to a generation before this one. We should take advantage of it.

In addition, Millennials do not tolerate injustice in the workplace. In a culture that permits--if not encourages--social justice work, many of the rising generation do not find it difficult to speak out if something bothers them. They don't want to keep quiet if they feel themselves subjected to discrimination in any form.

The ability to stand up courageously to those who you feel do not treat you fairly is a skill that many employees in corporate America lack. Millennials are members of an upcoming work force that isn't afraid to demand fair and equal rights--and they'll be all the better off for it. Although there has been widespread criticism about the work ethic of these so-called Millennials, we should not discount that there have been a great number of benefits that accompany them as well. People care about maintaining "green" corporations, distributing fair pay--the list could go on.

Next time, think before you criticize a Millennial in the work-place. You might find that you are wrong

By Peter Economy, *The Leadership Guy* via *inc.com.*
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