

Vision 2025 and Others Advance Work in 2016

More than 850 people took part in a wide array of Vision 2025 projects in 2016 as this novel approach inspired action. About 30 Capture Teams worked on dozens of projects: community gardens, youth engagement, developing a land-bank, preserving green space, re-invigorating the downtown, even marketing to improve the community's image.

Many projects got exciting things done, but big ideas with great promise will take longer. For instance, developing a land bank that can own, clean up and either beautify or help develop blighted properties could make a huge difference, but legal, financial and other issues need to be addressed.

Likewise, a charrette envisioning aesthetically pleasing flood channels with river access generated great excitement. The Army Corps of Engineers is working closely with the city and Vision 2025 to study Johnstown's rivers and watershed.

To spur early action, the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies (CFA), Discover Downtown Johnstown Partnership and Vision 2025 created Capture Awards, which provided \$500 to \$1,000 grants to several capture teams. Among other things, these awards installed pet stations along the Jim Mayer Riverwalk Trail, bought supplies and equipment for a co-working space for start-up businesses in downtown Johnstown,



expanded the local urban trail network and is developing a community art project near the Inclined Plane.

Another fast-moving project is a grant received by Discover Downtown Johnstown Partnership to develop a plan to make Main Street a "greenway."

Grants from CFA complemented the V25 work. CFA interns assessed community needs through research. To address the dangers of drugs, they awarded \$25,000 to Mindfulness Prevention Program of BOTTLEWORKS/The Arts on Third Avenue for the Mindful Schools curriculum and Project Alert to teach students about drugs and making positive decisions.

The Rec the Alleghenies Initiative Team (REC IT!) funded programs to promote the region's abundant recreational opportunities. Allegheny Unlimited Care Providers received \$5,000 for Rec the Alleghenies Expo, where groups have booths and demonstrations to promote active lifestyles. The Cambria County Conservation District received \$16,000 for Nature Discovery through Kayaking, where children and adults learn about boat safety and the outdoors. The Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority received \$4,000 for the Cambria County Trails Series: the Path of the Flood Historic Races, Ghost Town Trail Challenge, and Jim Mayer Trail Family Fun Run.

Entrepreneurial Development

Entrepreneurial development efforts again expanded in 2016.

Johnstown Area Regional Industries started the JARI Growth Fund to make loans of \$2,500 to \$25,000 to young businesses in the Southern Alleghenies. Loans can cover start-up costs, inventory, equipment, building acquisition and working

capital.

As a Vision 2025 project, co-working space was developed downtown to offer low-cost opportunities for start-up businesses and people who work from home. Learn more at www.814worx.com.

Entrepreneurial Alchemy continued the

annual PiTTchfest at Pitt-Johnstown as a regional competition where entrepreneurs win up to \$10,000 in cash and prizes to help them launch businesses. EA also holds meet-ups the first Monday of each month for entrepreneurs (or would-be ones) to develop ideas and grow their business, and has other initiatives outlined at www.eajohnstown.org.

Lift Johnstown supported by...



Mural painted on Mayer Trail



Groundbreaking for Que Mountain Bike Trail



Get to the Point outdoor yoga



Volunteer Award given to Gary Boysza



Cambria City Welcome Sign erected by Vision 2025 Green Team



Johnstown: "Mountain Town"

The image of Johnstown as a "Mountain Town" is gaining steam since an editor of Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine was the keynote speaker at the Johnstown Economic Summit. Jess Daddio writes about towns and cities from the Carolinas to West Virginia, and is reaching into southwestern Pennsylvania, where she was impressed with Johnstown's potential.

After two days touring and talking to outdoor recreationalists who absolutely love what this area has to offer, Daddio said Johnstown is closer than we realize to becoming a mountain destination, in part because we also have a rich architectural, cultural and growing social core in the city.

This is not a new idea; several recent studies including Carnegie-Mellon University's Remaking City's Institute that led to the creation of Vision 2025, highlight our rich surrounding environment as a huge, largely untapped asset.

This Lift Johnstown Annual Report highlights many of the exciting things happening to promote and better develop outdoor recreation, as well as the study presented as a companion to Daddio's address, which compares our quality of life with that of 16 similarly situated cities from the Carolinas to Vermont.

2016 Annual Report Highlights >>>

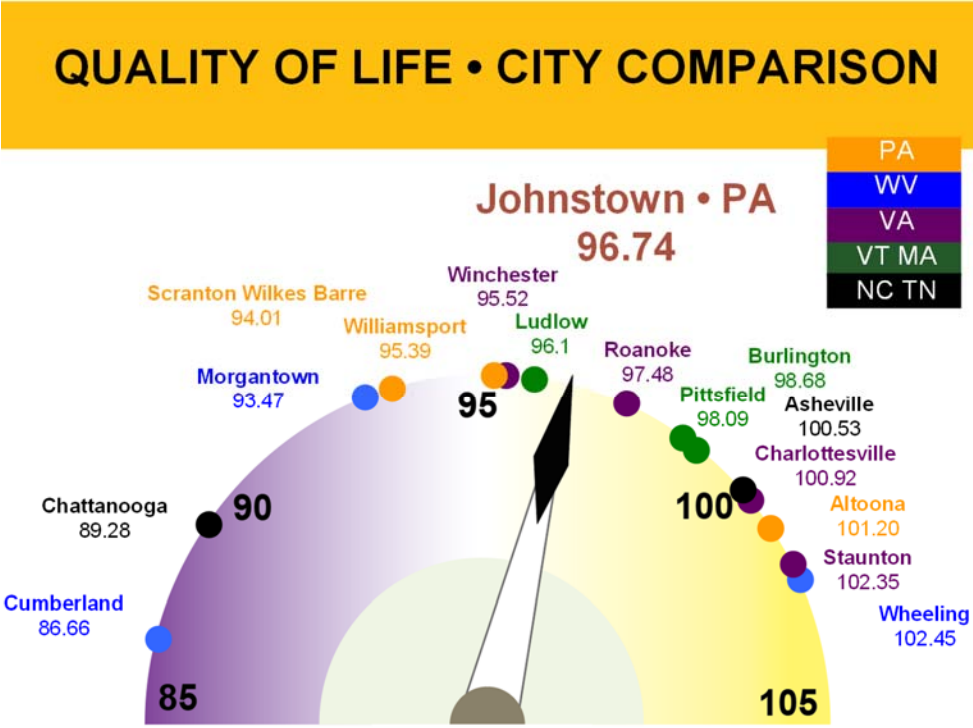
- Vision 2025 engages 850 people in improving our community.
- Sept. 11 National Memorial Trail being developed through Johnstown.
- Volunteer Spotlight Award winners.
- Walk of Hope, other wellness initiatives.
- JARI fund to bolster economy.

Johnstown’s Out Ranks Many Cities

Johnstown ranked 8th in a quality-of-life study of 16 comparably sized and situated cities from North Carolina to Vermont. The study by John McGrath and Skip Glenn, marketing professors at Pitt-Johnstown, was presented to the Economic Summit and used objectively defined data, not opinions.

Wheeling, WV, and Staunton, VA, had top scores of 102; Cumberland, MD, and Chattanooga, TN, scored lowest at 87 and 89, respectively. Johnstown’s 97 was the average.

While some locals are surprised at the results, Glenn said myths trouble our image. The biggest myth: Johnstown has a safety problem; we ranked 8 out of 16 cities on safety. Four seasons distinguish us from cities to the south with little lasting snow. Our top qualities are affordability and health care; our weaknesses are entertainment



and commuter efficiency. However, since 2009, our score improved and the most improvement was in entertainment. We’re trending up!

9/11 Trail Progressing in 2 Counties

Development and planning are moving on the Sept. 11 National Memorial Trail from the Great Allegheny Passage through the Flight 93 National Memorial to Johnstown.

After 10 days of frantic online voting, the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies won third place in a competition by NRG Energy, winning \$5,000 to help develop the 9/11 trail in Cambria and Somerset counties. Many thanks to the thousands of people who voted.

A 21-mile, on-road connection opened from the GAP at Garrett to the Flight 93 memorial. CSX gave Somerset County a rail corridor from Garrett almost to Berlin, and grants of \$400,000 from the National Park Service and \$130,000 from the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources fund design and development of four miles of off-road trail there.

A separate \$23,000 NPS grant to Somerset County is examining options for connecting Flight 93 to Johnstown.

Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority received a \$170,000 state Greenways, Trails & Parks grant to study options for connecting the 9/11 Trail and Main Line Canal Greenway through urban

Johnstown; the Path of the Flood heading north from downtown will be part of both the 9/11 and Main Line trails.

The 9/11 Trail is a tribute to those who perished in the September 11 attacks and to the heroic first responders. The 1,300-mile trail links Ground Zero in N.Y.C., the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and the Flight 93 memorial site in Shanksville.

Whitewater, Trail Work

Construction of Stonycreek Whitewater Park Phase II, expected this summer, will enable the lower whitewater play feature to function properly and build rest rooms in adjacent Greenhouse Park. The project is funded with grants of \$160,000 each from DCNR and the Richard King Mellon Foundation, and \$7,000 from Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau.

Construction of 17 miles of mountain-bike trail around Quemahoning Lake is progressing. In 2016, four miles of trail were built; completion is expected in late 2017. This will be the area’s 14th mountain-bike area.

Ghost Town among Nation’s Best Trails

The Ghost Town Trail was named the nation’s 7th best hiking trail by American-Towns Media. The top trails include the Appalachian Trail, the John Muir Trail in Yosemite National Park and the Continental Divide Trail. The Ghost Town was selected based on its unique historical features and good reviews from trail users.

This 36-mile rail-trail is expanding: Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority will build a 9.3-mile extension of the Rexis Branch this year. One more section creates perhaps the longest loop trail in the country.

The authority continues its Cambria County Trails Series this past summer. The Path of the Flood Historic Races will be held May 27, the Ghost Town Trail Challenge on June 17 and the Jim Mayer Trail Family Fun Run on Sept.9. The Path of the Flood race is cosponsored by Johnstown Area Heritage Association and the other events benefit Friends of Cambria County Trails, whose memberships help develop and maintain the county trail network.

Lift Johnstown Promotes Volunteers

Lift Johnstown supports volunteerism by presenting a quarterly Volunteer Spotlight Award, organizing the annual Project Party and supporting the Get Connected on-line volunteer registry of United Way of the Laurel Highlands.

The 2016 Project Party attracted over 400 people to volunteer and 75 non-profit agencies who display their organization’s needs while the community is invited to “shop” for a volunteer activity that fits their schedule and skills. Seminars offered non-profits information on capacity building, finance, laws and regulations.

Lift recognized presented four Volunteer Spotlight Awards in 2016 recognizing outstanding contributions to our community.

Gary Boysza was honored for 16 years as a Cambria County Special Olympics volunteer,

Lift Named a ‘Top 100’

Pennsylvania Business Central named Lift Johnstown one of the top 100 non-profits across the entire central part of the state in early 2016.



serving as sports coordinator and head coach, mentoring students and supporting outreach and fundraising.

Victoria Brezovic is the mother of 13 children, whom she engaged in community service, and has been a leader in Kernville Connects since its inception. Her community service started in 1989 at the YWCA, Community Action and Head Start.

Mike Youchak donated dozens of hours of engineering work worth over \$5,000 to obtain environmental permits and engineer a bioswale for the 17-mile Quemahoning Lake Mountain Bike Trail.

Ted and Judy Risch first volunteered at Camp PARC as teenagers. After over 50 years, they still volunteer as camp directors, devoting their life to serve the special needs of area residents with developmental disabilities related to autism, cerebral palsy, brain injury, Down syndrome and other issues.

In addition, Lift:

- Promoted and helped recruit volunteers, judges and teams for the First LEGO LEAGUE SW/Central PA Championship Tournament, where the



Ted Risch, center, and his wife, Judy, receive Lift Johnstown’s Volunteer Spotlight Award from Brad Clemenson.

local Robotics Teams won.

- Promoted and participated in the community March for Peace.
- Helped organize and staff neighborhood clean-up days.
- Promoted Vision 2025 programs, initiatives and activities.
- Helped renew the Green Drinks environmental networking event.

Wellness Initiatives Priority for Life and Region

Promoting wellness is a major priority of Lift Johnstown.

When the American Cancer Society suspended the Johnstown Relay for Life, “The Johnstown Walk of Hope” was born. Its inaugural event in 2016, sponsored by Laurel Auto Group-Ann Harris Smith Foundation, raised over \$26,000, which was donated to UPMC Cancer Center, 1889 Foundation for the Conemaugh Cancer Center, Joyce Murtha Breast Care Center and Children Are Precious. The 2017 event will be held June 3.

Lift also promoted throughout “Get to the Point,” a Zumba-yoga event held outdoors at the Point Stadium, benefitting Discover Downtown Partnership.



The 1889 Foundation-Jefferson Center for Population Health was created with a \$7.5 million, five-year gift from the foundation. The center is a partnership with the Jefferson College of Population Health of Thomas

Jefferson University of Philadelphia. The center, based in Johnstown, will identify, quantify and develop strategies for improving the health of citizens in Cambria and Somerset Counties.