



VOICE OF BUSINESS

Dayton center elevates minority-owned businesses



Chris Kershner
President and CEO
Dayton Area Chamber
of Commerce

Assisting minority businesses has been part of the fabric of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce for decades. In 2010, we formalized these services with the integration of the Minority Business Partnership. Today, we are going next level with our partnership and assistance for minority-

ty-owned (MBE), women-owned (WBE) and veteran-friendly business enterprises (VFBE).

On July 1, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce was named by the Ohio Department of Development as the Dayton Region Minority Business Assistance Center (MBAC). This 12-county service region overlays seamlessly with the Chamber's 14-county region and the service model is directly aligned with the services we have been providing for years to our MBE, WBE and VFBE communities. Now we are taking these services to a new level and expanding our local team to ensure ALL businesses have every opportunity to succeed.

The Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce Minority Business Assistance Center (Dayton MBAC) will be a one-stop shop for all services. If you are a MBE, WBE and VFBE in the 12-county region in need of certification, supplier diversity, capital infusion, business advising, financial consulting or business connections, the Dayton MBAC is here to assist. Led by Jelani Johnson, director of the Dayton MBAC, we are expanding our minority business team to include experts in certification, business advising and financial services. We will be working with partners in multiple counties to bring these services directly to

business owners throughout the Dayton region. It is vital that all businesses, in every county, have the opportunity for success and growth.

As we grow minority-owned, women-owned and veteran-friendly business enterprises in our Dayton region, we are growing locally-owned companies that are our neighbors, friends and local employers. Removing barriers to growth, verifying and vetting ownership through certification, we can make sure their businesses are well positioned for growth. As all local companies grow, so does the Dayton region.

Owners of these companies spend money in our region, employ people in our region and support our non-profit community. Recruiting companies to the region that bring thousands of jobs and new investment is great, but the future of Dayton is supporting our locally owned compa-

nies so they can be the next business establishing a 2,000-employee headquarters, becoming designated as a Tier 1 supplier or being the prime lead on a contracting opportunity.

The future is strong in the Dayton region and we are excited to serve all minority, women and veteran-friendly business enterprises. Your chamber of commerce is committed to walking shoulder-to-shoulder with our minority business community and growing alongside ALL businesses in the Dayton region.

Chris Kershner is the CEO and President of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce.



Work continues on the Bass Pro Shop store as seen here Thursday along Interstate 75 North in West Chester Twp. It is expected to open sometime in 2024. MICHAEL D. CLARK / STAFF

Bass Pro

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"The Streets has set itself apart as a destination with businesses like Duluth Trading, Top Golf, as well as Holtman's and its newest residents Sonder's brewing and (joined soon by) Bass Pro Shop. The addition of Bass Pro demonstrates the sustainability of West Chester as a place to live your best life and a place where businesses prosper and families grow."

"Bass Pro is moving

ahead quickly and West Chester is thrilled to see the progress. The building looks great and once opened will certainly offer our community a unique experience," said Wilson.

The opening of the West Chester store will also see the closing of the existing and smaller Bass Pro Shops attached to the former Forest Fair Mall in Forest Park along the southern border of Fairfield. No date has been given for the closure.

I-75 is one of the nation's most heavily traveled interstate highways, said Joe Hin-

son, president and CEO of the West Chester/Liberty Chamber Alliance.

The addition of the upscale outdoors store at such a high-visibility location will further attract customers to the fast-growing township, said Hinson.

"The construction of the new Bass Pro Shops has changed the landscape in West Chester along I-75 very quickly," said Hinson.

"This unique, 123,348-square-foot facility, including a 20,000-square-foot restaurant, will be a destination location for

our area and the Tri-State region."

"The 22 acres off of Allen Road stayed vacant for almost a decade after Bass Pro Shops purchased the land. With 153,000 vehicles a day traveling on I-75 through West Chester, this giant retailer will provide an economic boost to West Chester and Butler County and bring new energy to The Streets of West Chester.

"And the closest Bass Pro Shops to their new West Chester location will be two hours away in Clarks-ville, Indiana."

Projects

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space – finished by the second quarter of 2024. It will be located near the company's first hangar at the airport.

Joseph Geraghty, Port Authority executive director, said Monday his understanding is that the new Sierra Nevada hangar will employ 500 people. In a June interview, a Sierra Nevada executive said the company will have 150 Dayton-area employees.

Asked about the difference in projected employment numbers Tuesday, the company released a statement saying it "is wholly committed to our previous promise of 150 jobs at our new site in Dayton. The second hangar reflects our continued growth within the aerospace and defense industry and, in particular, Dayton, Ohio. While we have incredible promise for SNC's (Sierra Nevada Corp.) growth in the Miami Valley, we do not yet have a formal commitment for employment above our previous level."

The company's initial hangar was the first privately owned major maintenance, repair and overhaul facility for aircraft in the Dayton area since the

days of Orville Wright, Brady Hauboldt, Sierra Nevada's vice president of aviation strategic plans and programs, said in June.

The company works for the Air Force, the Department of Defense, the Navy, Army and other federal customers, with some commercial work, as well, Hauboldt told the Dayton Daily News then.

Hauboldt is a former Air Force Life Cycle Management Center vice commander who served at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

In the other area business expansion, Miami Twp.-based Midmark has more than 2,000 employees globally, with about 1,000 of them working in Dayton-area and Versailles locations. The company has customers in the medical, dental and veterinary industries.

Construction is expected to begin in Versailles in the third quarter of this year, with a third quarter 2024 completion date. The expansion will include 140 parking spaces on two acres at 60 Vista Drive, Port Authority documents indicate.

Questions about that project were sent to representatives of Midmark.

Contact this reporter at tom.gnau@coxinc.com.



The new Sheetz gas station located at the corner of Old Troy Pike and Taylorsville Road in Huber Heights is one of many Sheetz stores that will open in the Dayton area in the next few years. MARSHALL GORBY / STAFF

Sheetz

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will be offering free self-serve coffee and soda for the entire grand opening day. The company will donate \$2,500 to The Foodbank Inc. and to Special Olympics of Ohio, according to company officials.

Sheetz currently operates 680-plus store locations across Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio and Maryland, with all locations open 24/7, 365 days a year. The company touts its spe-

cialty drinks and "made-to-order" sandwiches and salads, ordered through touch-screen order point terminals.

When Sheetz announced in 2022 its plans to expand into western Ohio over the next five years, the company said it hoped to open its first Dayton store in 2024.

Sheetz is one of several gas station chains, along with Wawa, GetGo and others, that are either newly starting out or expanding in the Dayton market.

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Fatih Ozmen, CEO of Sierra Nevada Corp, talks with people Feb. 2, 2022, just before the Groundbreaking ceremony of the Sierra Nevada's new facility at Dayton international airport. MARSHALL GORBY / STAFF

Polka Dot Kids

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and also in a school environment before deciding to open up her own clinic. At Polka Dot Kids, Miller offers children with an individualized approach, while also helping avoid burnout for herself and any other therapists she may take on in the future.

"I have a bigger spectrum that I can target out here," Miller said.

Prior to her previous work experience as a therapist, Miller earned her undergraduate in psychology from the University of Toledo and worked as a preschool teacher before she went into occupational therapy.

"It kind of combines everything that I love. It's the psychology part, it's the

physical, the biomechanical piece," Miller said. "You get to be super creative and fun with it, too. So then I applied, and got into East Carolina University."

Miller works with all ages of children with special needs and other developmental issues, from infants, toddlers, and adolescents up to teens who are leaving high school and need help with life skills or job- and work-related skills. Her patients can include children with autism, developmental disabilities, and/or physical disabilities or injuries, such as from a stroke or a car accident.

"It really depends on like what the deficit is, so if it has to do with like musculature, we're going to work on strengthening," Miller said. "If it has to do with handwriting, we're going to be working on coordination



Polka Dot Kids is located at 36 South Richards Run in Springboro. JIM NOELKER / STAFF

and vision. If it's like autism, we're going to be working on a lot of sensory things."

For kids with down syndrome or cerebral palsy, Miller will focus on strengthening and then looking at how their environment can be adapted so it is easier for them to navigate.

"The big one in schools is handwriting, so we do a lot of table top type of stuff, but the biggest thing is really getting the whole body involved

and doing different kinds of movements with the kids, because nowadays, they're so sedentary in their play, their body systems aren't integrating the same way," Miller said. "It leads to difficulties the school work or self-regulation, like them misbehaving because they can't figure out their body yet."

Doctors are also seeing an increase of kids with vision issues due to screens, so Miller is grow-

ing her own skills and continuing her education by taking a course right now for a vision therapy, studying how to re-strengthen and reconnect that brain eye connection.

"There's so much that we do, and there's so many different ways you can tackle it and each therapist has their own approach and activities that they like that they think helps the most," she said.

Parents or guardians of kids with special needs or other issues they feel may benefit from occupational therapy can reach out to Polka Dot Kids for a free screening.

"They could just call and we could either set up a free screen where we can discuss their concerns and see if I'm seeing those deficits," Miller said. "And then from there, we can move on to a full eval-

uation and then therapy, and if they already have an evaluation, then I can just build off of that."

To receive occupational therapy in Ohio, a referral is not needed from a pediatrician, but it is helpful for insurance purposes, Miller said.

Early intervention is beneficial for addressing children's needs, she said.

"If families feel like there might be something off or something wrong, attacking it earlier rather than later is better for the kids because you don't want that gap to get bigger and bigger," Miller said.

For more information, visit polkadotdays.com. Miller's website also includes a blog with information, tips, and tricks to help with kids.