



by Francesco Pasqualino

Penn Hills is a great place to do business. I should know, because I've owned a restaurant in Penn Hills for over forty years, and each year, business is better than the last. Though we still have many customers who have been with us since our opening in 1971, our success is driven by an equal mix of customers from in and outside of Penn Hills. Being in the restaurant business, I have the opportunity to talk to many other business owners. Overwhelmingly, most tell me business is great. Along with existing businesses expanding, many new businesses have opened in the last few years.

Not many communities can boast of having six supermarkets within its borders. Along with Community Market, a family owned business since 1927, there are two Giant Eagles, two Aldis, and a Shop n Save. Along with the supermarkets we are home to multiple Walgreen's, Rite-Aids, GetGos, McDonalds, and Dollar Generals, among others. And most were built within the last few years.

Penn Hills, with Rodi Road at the forefront, has also quickly morphed into a medical community. Reproductive Health Center did an impressive job in remodeling the old Tivoli's Restaurant. Premier Medical has poured tremendous resources in its acquisition and construction of the site of the former Bally Fitness. BioMat USA is in the process of opening a plasma donation center in the Municipal Shopping Center. In medical education, The Institute of Medical Careers on Jefferson Road has more than doubled its parking lot to accommodate its growth. With the Pittsburgh School of Massage Therapy, Penn Hills is also a leader in holistic health education.

There is no doubt the national chains and large corporations love Penn Hills. But Penn Hills' greatest strength has always been its small, locally-owned businesses. Turner Dairy is the best example of a great Penn Hills business and neighbor. Penn Hills has been the home of Turner Dairy since its humble, pastoral beginnings by Charles Turner in 1930. Generations of Turners have continued his legacy of delivering quality, locally-sourced, national award winning products. In the beverage and dairy industry, there is no better name than Turner.

On the same street as Turner's, there is another great family business, Penn Hills Lawn and Garden Center. Originally located in a small rented location across the street from their present location, they have managed, in a few short years, to do the difficult task of acquiring multiple properties to expand and grow into one of the finest lawn, garden and gift shops in the area. With community events and workshops, Penn Hills Lawn and Garden is another business that reaches well beyond the borders of our community. And if one great garden center is not enough, Penn Hills has two. Frankstown Gardens has been growing (pun intended) their family business since 1939.

Penn Hills is also home to many family businesses that have relocated to our community, such as Leonard Labriola Italian Food Stores. The original Labriola's started in the 1920's on Larimer Avenue, and moved to Penn Hills in 1969. Their Penn Hills location is considered the flagship store of its small empire of Italian Specialty Food Stores. More recently, a few other businesses have relocated their entire operations to Penn Hills. In 2009, Stoecklein's Bakery relocated from Blawnox to Penn Hills.

If you haven't tried Stoecklein's, you're missing out on some of the area's best, made-from-scratch baked goods. In the Penn Hills Shopping Center, brothers Peter and Jay Cravotta recently purchased the entire building that houses Giant Eagle and relocated their Office Furniture Warehouse to the space above Giant Eagle. Not only have they created a spectacular showroom highlighting both new and used office furniture, the two young entrepreneurs have also secured Planet Fitness as a tenant. There are numerous other businesses, small and large that call Penn Hills home. I can't begin to mention them all.

Although I realize that Penn Hills, like every other community, has faults, I have never been more proud and hopeful of the future of Penn Hills. It's not just businesses that make a good community. Mayor and Council, aware of the problems Penn Hills faces with its aging housing stock, has become very proactive in fighting blight. The Municipality has just hired additional Code Enforcement officers, and Mayor and Council recently enacted tougher ordinances for rental properties. Mayor and Council, along with the Planning Department, Code Enforcement, Police Department, School District and many civic organizations are working to solve the many problems this community faces, and insure that Penn Hills will continue to be a great place to live and work.

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