

OUR TOWN FOUNDATION

★ Shaping Hamburg's Future ★

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 19, 2019



Blueprint
COMMUNITIES

Taste of
Hamburg-er Festival



Our Town Foundation is a charitable non-profit 501(c) 3 organization

2018 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeff Pettit, *President*
Chris Yost, *V.P.*
Cindy Blefgen, *Treasurer*
Linda Wood
Recording Secretary
Ann Steffel
Gerry Schappell
Stephanie Adam
Dr. John Smith
Allen Madeira
Katherine Rightmyer
O'Brien
Vreeland Wood
Joshua Youpa
Martha Bertolet (resigned)
Donna Palko (resigned)

THEATER

John Smith
Katherine Rightmyer
O'Brien
Vreeland Wood
Linda Wood
Matt Polis
Clare Benz
Gerry Schappell

TASTE OF HAMBURG-ER FESTIVAL

Sandra Christman
Chris Tray
Wendell Yoder
Rita Yoder
Dorothy Brobst
Glenn Brobst
Keith Brobst
Gregg Adams
Michelle Henne
Stan Henne
Marita Beers
Kathy Bernhard
Chris Yost
Jeff Pettit
Lori Moyer
Mark Flammer

FUND RAISING

Donna Palko
Dorothy Brobst
Michelle Henne
Chris Yost
Jeff Pettit
Theresa Snyder
Rebecca Henne
Lynn Weller

ARTS ALLIANCE

Allen Madeira
Randy McCurdy
Ken Liskey
Jay Ressler
Martha Ressler
Thomas Schucker
Petra Martin
Marty Tomosy Herman
Karla Jensen
Hil Eldridge
Gerry Cole
Chuck Cole
Ann Steffel

DESIGN

Jerry Becker
Jeff Mengel
Joshua Butz
Betty Bray
Melanie Geiger

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Eric George
Kay Greenawalt
Tim Flynn
Clare Benz
John Leonforte
Jerry Rotelle
Gabriella Wilson
Carol Adams
Alyse Mitten

STAFF: Deena Kershner, Executive Director
Dina Madara, Arts Coordinator, Social Media Communications
Lori LaPearl, Administrative Assistant
Bethany Sholl, Theater Manager
Stephanie Adam, Theater Coordinator

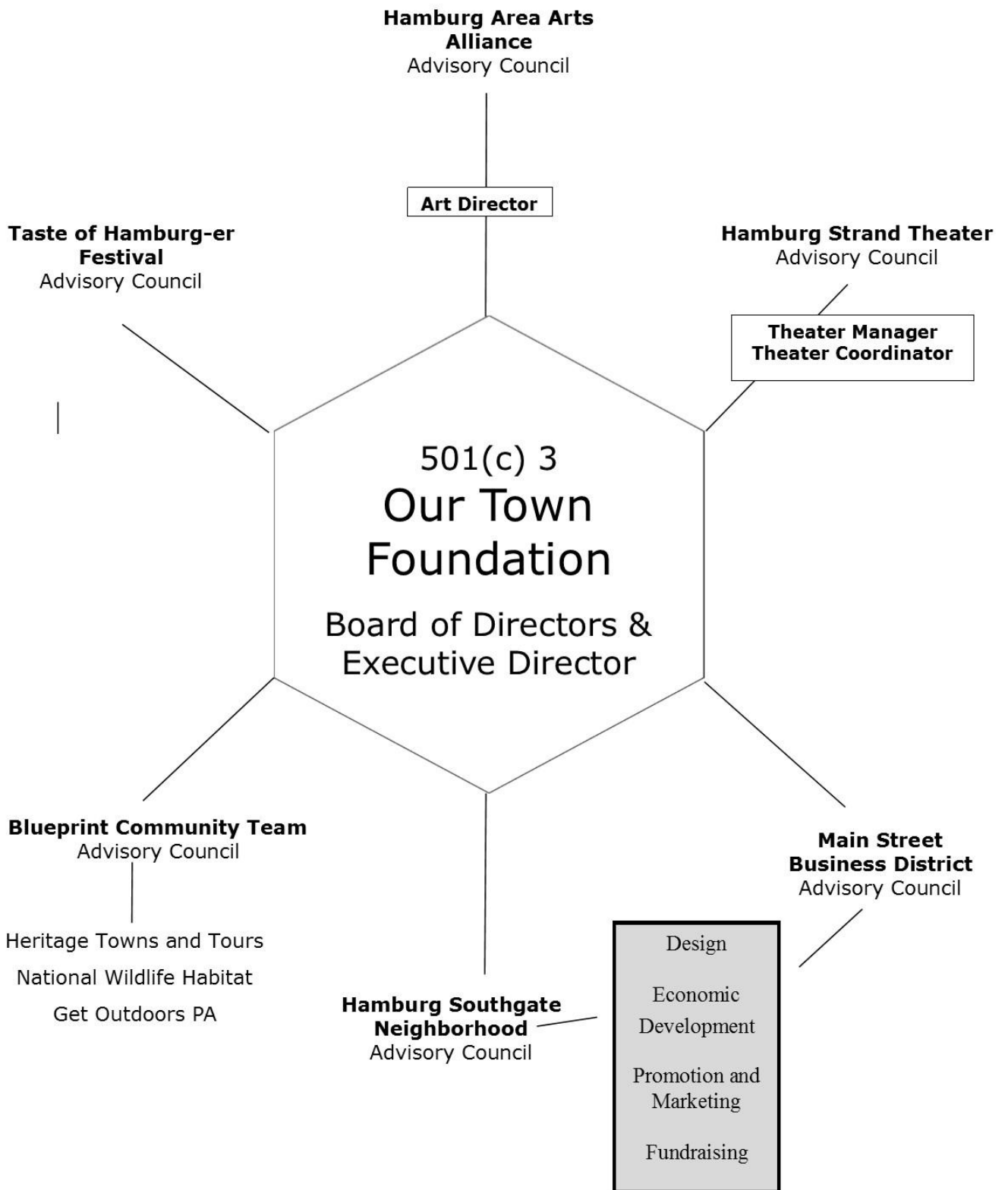
Special thanks to all the volunteers who donated 3369 hours of their time in 2018. Their volunteer hours equal \$80,500.00 in labor costs, as per government statistics on the value of volunteers.

OUR TOWN FOUNDATION'S REVITALIZATION TIMELINE

- 2002 Received designation as a Main Street Community (manager hired in 2003)
- 2004 The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival was initiated and has grown to be an annual event bringing over 35,000 people into the downtown
- 2005 Our Town Foundation represented Hamburg as one of 22 communities chosen by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh to participate in their Blueprint Community Program
- 2006 The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance was formed, and the Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg opened. Both are administered by Our Town Foundation
- 2006 A Native Wildlife Habitat Program was initiated and Hamburg became the first community in PA to receive certification as a Native Wildlife Habitat Community.
- 2007 Completed a \$1.5 million streetscape enhancement project in the downtown
The Reading Railroad Heritage Museum opened to the public
Completed a trail link from the town to the Borough's community park
- 2008 Sr. Housing project was completed at the site of a blighted, abandoned knitting mill
Completed additional trail improvements and installed canoe docks at the community park
Purchased new holiday lighting for the community
- 2010 Received designation as an Elm Street Community and the Southgate Neighborhood Revitalization Program was initiated
Received National Historic District Status
Partnered with the Schuylkill River Greenway Assoc. to implement a Heritage Towns & Tours Program
- 2012 Completed an Historic Interpretive Trail at the Kernsville Dam including historical interpretive signs and GPS information
Completed a feasibility study on the Balthaser building, a huge, vacant building in our downtown
- 2013 Completed an Affordable Housing Program in which 15 low to moderate income homeowners received financial assistance to make necessary improvements to their homes
Purchased the Hamburg Strand Theater to prevent it from its demise
Erected wayward signage throughout the town directing people to heritage resources
- 2014 Hamburg Strand Theater converted to a digital projection system and a new roof was put on the theater
- 2015 Purchased a vacant lot (named State Street Square) within the downtown Main Street corridor to host events and use as a community gathering place
- 2016 Began a public arts initiative. Painted Hamburg's first downtown mural on a building and also placed a large sculpture on the State Street Square lot
Received a \$165,000 grant to improve and beautify the Borough owned 3rd and Grand Street parking lot
- 2017 Surpassed the Hamburg Strand Theater Capital Campaign goal of raising \$200,000 which funded major renovations and improvements to the facility so it would remain a viable community hub
- 2018 Painted Hamburg's 3rd large mural on the façade of Hamburg Manufacturing on 4th Street.
Initiated two new downtown events: Artdrenaline (a day camp for kids) and Hamburg Hoopla to honor Hamburg's musicians

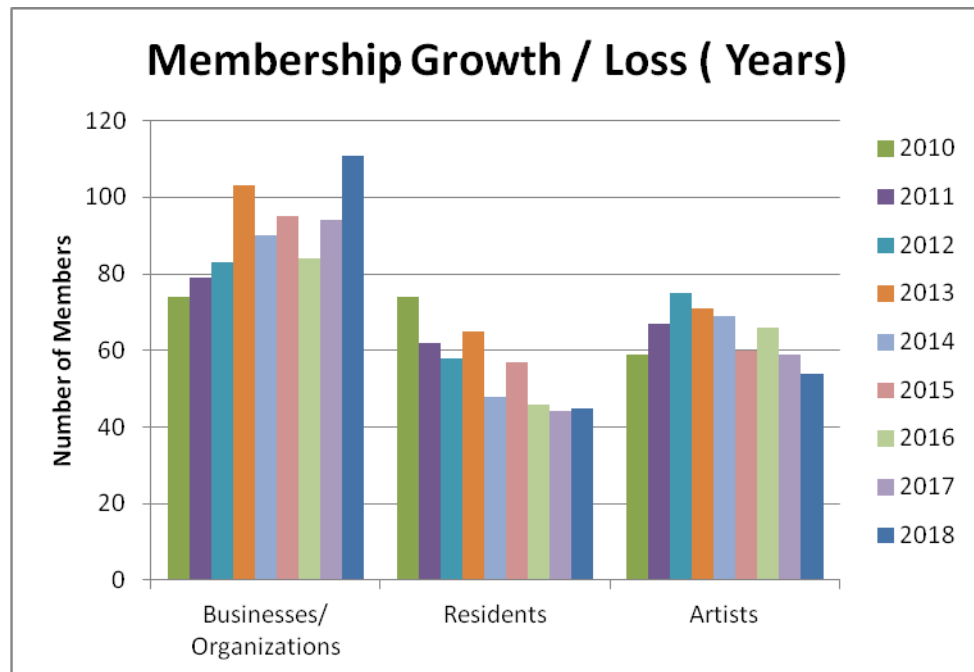
Items above are in addition to our other promotional activities, events, façade programs, smaller beautification projects, etc.

Our Town Foundation Organizational Structure



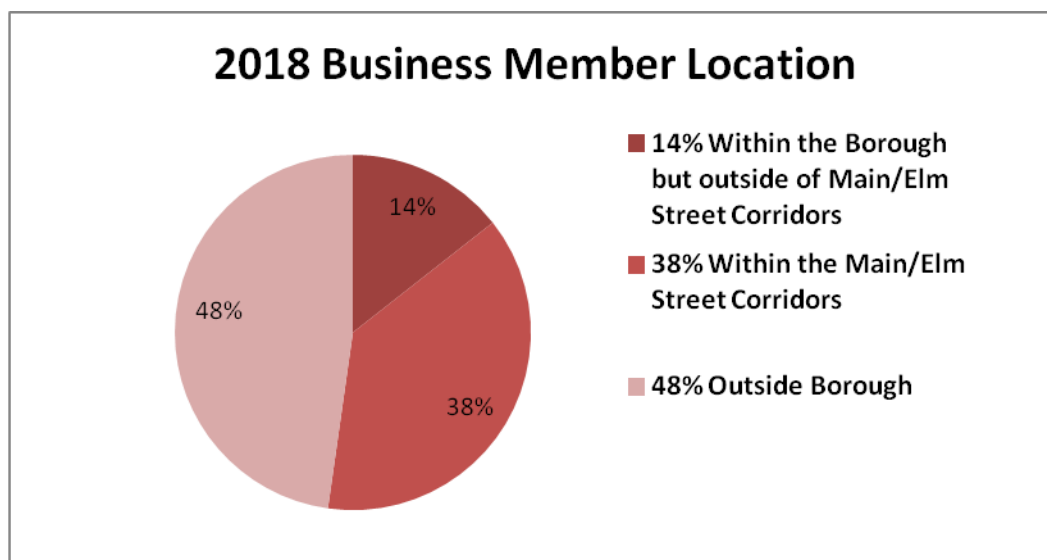
Membership

Through the generosity of donors who have faith in our program, the Foundation is able to carry out its mission. 210 residents, artists, and businesses were members of OTF in 2018. This was an increase of 13 members from the previous year.



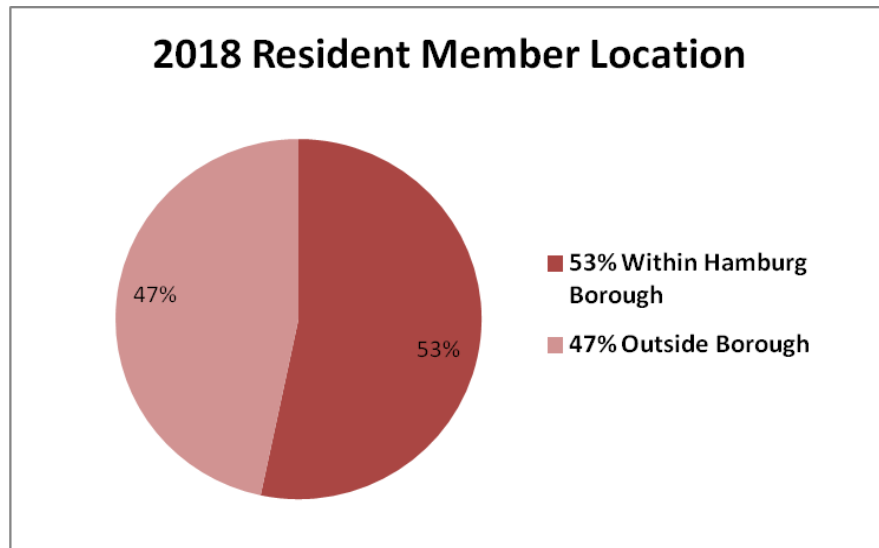
Business/Organization Membership (111 members)

Business memberships increased by a total of 17 members during 2018. This was approximately an 18% increase. Over the past several years the largest growth in business memberships are from those located outside of the Borough. This is due to the fact that there has been a surge in business growth in neighboring townships and a loss of businesses located within the Borough, especially within the downtown corridor. It is vital for the Foundation to support all businesses within the area, since they all play a role in attracting visitors, residents, and additional entrepreneurs into the community.



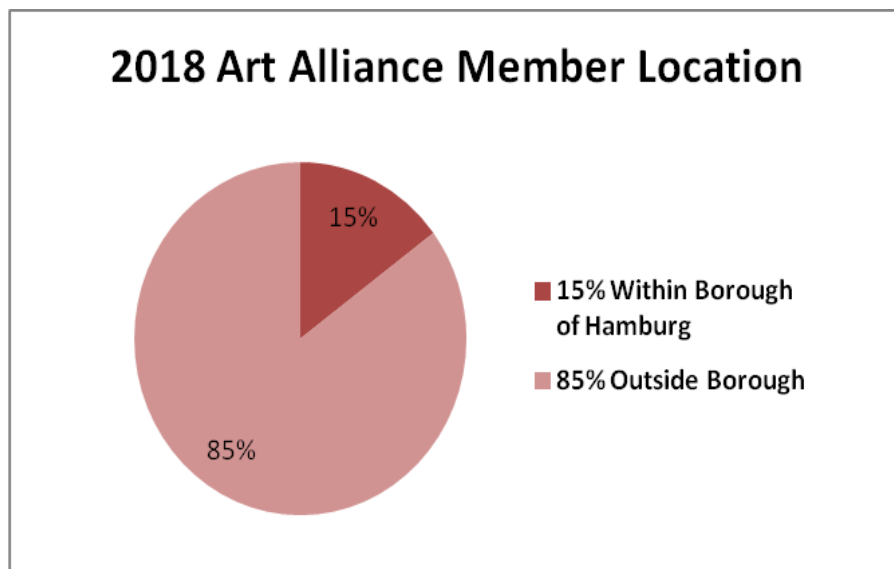
Resident/Family Memberships (45 members)

The residential sector also benefits from the Foundation's revitalization efforts. This report demonstrates several community projects initiated by the Foundation such as the Hometown Heroes banners, a community garden, and hosting several downtown events. As community improvements are made, the quality of life improves and the values of homes increase. Resident memberships from within the Borough as well as the neighboring townships confirm that the greater Hamburg community supports our endeavors.



Artist Membership (54 members)

Upon initiation in 2006, the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance (HAAA) consisted of a handful of local artists - both visual and performing - who supported our goal of increasing arts awareness in the community. The Alliance now boasts 54 members, of which only eight reside within the Hamburg Borough. Of the 54 HAAA members, 39 of them display in the Gallery, providing residents and tourists a sampling of our regional arts and culture. 25 of those artists have been active volunteers, each contributing at least 10 hours of service to some part of the community organization.



Organization – Board of Directors

Collectively, the Board of Directors (Organization Committee) assumes legal and philosophical responsibilities for all program activities. The Board is solely responsible for establishing program policy, hiring staff, and determining the goals for the organization. They make recommendations to - and oversee the work of - the numerous committees, and they approve the annual program budget and committee action plans. The Board of Directors strives to get everyone working towards common goals.

Over the past 16 years, the Foundation has become an extremely diverse organization that is reaching out to all facets of the Hamburg Community in an effort to maintain and further enhance this already very special place. The organization evolved from its early beginnings of being a downtown Main Street Revitalization Organization into a full-fledged Community Revitalization Corporation (CRC), expanding its efforts into several areas of the community.

Our Town Foundation currently administers six programs under the umbrella organization: The downtown Main Street Program, Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, Hamburg Area Arts Alliance, Hamburg Strand Theater, The Blueprint Community Program/Heritage Towns and Tours, and the Southgate Neighborhood Revitalization. This requires partnerships with other organizations and numerous community volunteers to ensure that our revitalization efforts stretch throughout the entire borough and nearby areas.

Communities that are most successful are those that have grasped the concept that revitalization is not a project with a beginning and an end. It never ends. Just as sound management of any business remains imperative after its start up, the ongoing management of community revitalization projects is essential to economic stability and quality of life.

The Board of Directors (Organization Committee) is responsible for the following:

- Assuring sustainability of the organization
- Reviewing all financial aspects of the organization and approving the annual budget
- Assuring all proper policies and procedures are followed according to by-laws and government regulations
- Forming additional advisory councils as applicable
- Capital campaigns, membership drives
- Researching additional funding sources
- Networking with other organizations, public representatives, business owners and community leaders
- Assessing the borough's assets, liabilities, and current trends and weaknesses
- Determining priorities and approving the committee's annual work plans based on community needs and desires
- Seeking community involvement and media support
- Recruiting and managing the volunteer pool, including school students
- Overseeing the staff and the daily operations of the office
- Attending training sessions to stay educated on all aspects of implementing a Community Revitalization Program
- Hosting membership gatherings

Main Street – Where it all Began

The Main Street Mission: To revitalize, promote, and preserve downtown historic Hamburg for our families and future generations to enjoy.

Our vision of Hamburg is one of vibrant streets adorned with restored historic buildings filled with shops, restaurants and professional services. The town will prosper from the abundant natural, cultural, and historic resources within the community. Hamburg will once again be the premier location in Northern Berks to shop, dine and be entertained.

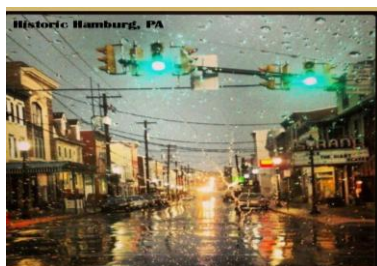
Downtowns are the heart of a community; they are symbolic of a district's economy, quality of life, and public pride. A downtown is a long-term community asset that must be nurtured, maintained, and promoted. Having a well developed, well-educated, financially stable revitalization organization is the best way to ensure that our downtown will be successful for the long term.

Commercial districts are prominent employment centers. Even the smallest commercial districts employ hundreds of people and are often collectively the community's largest employer. Thus, successful downtowns provide incentive for all current residents to remain. Main street property owners pay a significant portion of the community's tax base. If the district declines, property values drop, placing more of a tax burden on other parts of town. Likewise, a healthy commercial core protects property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods.

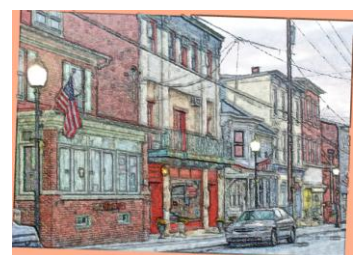
Besides the financial advantages, a strong business district provides convenience for the residents. Downtown Hamburg is within walking distance of the residential base, providing easy accessibility for the community and reducing the reliance on auto-dependent shopping. The local government offices are located within walking distance as well.

Cultural and heritage tourism is on the rise; therefore, we must continue to preserve and enhance our numerous heritage resources that are available for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Downtown Hamburg possesses a great deal of historic character – the town still contains significant architectural styles and historical properties. Preservation of these assets increases property values and attracts interested investors and tourists into the town. Older boroughs which are preserving their historical assets are the ones succeeding in today's competitive market. We must use the past to inspire the present!

Lastly, a thriving downtown provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate. The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, Hamburg Hoopla, and other downtown events all reinforce sense of community. When viewing a movie at the Hamburg Strand Theater, or getting a bite to eat at our local eateries - surely you will see friends or neighbors. Where would we congregate without our community centers?



Postcard Pictures of Downtown



Taste of Hamburg-er Festival

Named one of the top twelve unique festivals in PA, this event keeps growing, and growing, and growing! The festival was featured on QVC's "In the Kitchen with Dave" in June, 2016. This Festive community event brought approximately 3,000 to the town in 2004, the first year of the event, and currently attracts approximately 40,000 to the Hamburg Borough annually.



The event is one that supports a broad range of stakeholders within the community, while serving as a major fund raiser for the Our Town Foundation. The downtown businesses report an increase in sales due to the volume of people that are strolling right outside their stores. Many businesses located within the festival corridor display their wares on the streets to entice people into their shops. It is reported that this annual event is now the best day of the year for the merchants. Numerous nonprofits and churches also participate, either by selling food or offering an activity providing an opportunity to raise money for their organization and to network within the community. Regional artists and crafters are encouraged to set up displays providing a means to display and sell their artwork. Benefiting the most, however, are the restaurants and caterers who sell a variety of burgers and side dishes to the festival attendees. The festival provides an opportunity for the chefs to become creative with their burgers, possibly trying a new recipe for visitors to sample.

In 2010 the festival expanded from three blocks to five, providing additional vendor space on Pine and South 3rd Streets. In 2011, it expanded again to include ½ block of State Street, and in 2012, another expansion took the festival down to 2nd Street on State. In 2015, Our Town Foundation purchased the vacant grass lot located at 222 – 228 State Street and expanded the festival into that location, adding another entertainment area and a 2nd beer garden. The M & T Lot located at the corner of 4th & Pine Streets also became a selling area. In past years it was used for parking only. In 2017, due to the number of vendor registrations, the festival once again expanded another block, adding the 200 block of South 3rd Street. The eight block area is completely filled with burger stands, artisans and crafters, entertainment, children's activities, and more.



The Luther Burger



Mac & Cheese



Surf and Turf Burger

The festival has become an anticipated event that grows with every year. It has become a homecoming day for families and friends. While the majority of visitors come from Berks County, we have seen an increase in people attending from the surrounding counties due to increased advertising outside of our immediate area. In addition, because of an increased web presence and marketing, visitors from out of state continue to increase as well. According to the results of a zip code survey done in conjunction with the People's Choice Award for Best Burger, the results show that people are attending the festival from:

Hamburg	17%	Schuylkill County	12%
Reading	12%	Other PA Counties	16%
All other Berks County	32%	Outside the State	4%
Lehigh County	6%		

The Taste of Hamburg-er Festival has its own Facebook page which has 7335 followers, up from 6818 at the beginning of the year. This represents approximately a 7.5% increase in followers.

- Over 40,000 attended the 2018 event
- 2145 highest number of burgers sold at one stand
- 17,299 burgers reported sold
- 168 volunteers the day of the festival
- 1415 volunteer hours
- 61 sponsors
- 36 burger stands
- 83 artists/crafter stands
- 33 home based business stands
- 29 miscellaneous literature/non-profit stands
- 36 miscellaneous food vendor stands
- 13 downtown participating businesses
- 15 activity stands
- 5 stages hosting 17 bands and 12 individual performing artists



Professional Burger Eating Competition



Amateur Burger Eating Competition

The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance: The Cultural Movement

The Alliance's Mission: To support and showcase local artists and to advance the awareness of arts in the community.

The Alliance's Vision: We envision a community that engages the arts, both visual and performing. There will be public art on display; street festivals and gatherings for artists, performers and the general public; galleries and other spaces for group and solo exhibitions and sales of artwork; and educational opportunities in the form of art classes and workshops, lectures and presentations. People of all ages and races will embrace the cultural and artistic movement transpiring in the area.

The arts support economic development by strengthening communities, stimulating demand for local products and supporting the economic activities of other local businesses. Traditional artists work in artistic styles and use techniques that emerge from the values, beliefs, ideas, and practices of communities of people. Studies show that people who participate most actively in arts and culture also participate actively in community and civic life. Investments in the arts are simultaneously investments in the communities that support them.

Results of a market assessment of Hamburg's business district and the surrounding area clearly concluded that the town's growth and its future would depend on whether it shunned or embraced the arts and culture of the area. Heeding those findings, Our Town Foundation formed the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance (HAAA) in 2006. This subsidiary of the Foundation currently supports a network of over fifty artists.

During 2018, 39 member artists displayed and sold their work in the Art & Craft Gallery of Hamburg, a co-op art gallery managed by the Alliance. Located in the heart of the downtown, the co-op provides an affordable means for artists to display and sell their work. The Gallery first opened in 2006 and quickly outgrew its original space. Its present location has over 1,800 square feet of display space allowing all mediums of art to be showcased and sold.

A Hamburg Area Arts Alliance face book page was created in 2014 and currently has 448 followers, an increase of 71, or 19% over the previous year.

The Alliance's continued success can be contributed to our devoted artist members – a team of creative and imaginative people who share a common vision of a community rich with culture. The future of the Arts Alliance looks strong as dedicated volunteers and members continue to carry on their mission of supporting the arts movement in the community.



Artdrenaline Camp Students



Randy Hamlin performing
at Hamburg Hoopla



Sampling of art work in the Art
& Craft Gallery of Hamburg

2018 Arts Alliance Accomplishments

- Continued the public art movement by funding the 3rd downtown mural which was painted on the façade of Hamburg Manufacturing on South 4th Street
- Hosted the inaugural “Artdrenaline” day camp for kids combining arts with physical activities
- Kicked off “Hamburg Hoopla” a one day music festival to recognize Hamburg’s musicians
- Continued to manage the Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg
- Recognized nine member artists during our “Featured Artist of the Month” receptions
- Offered art classes for the public
- Participated in the annual Hawk Mountain Arts Tour
- Conducted a silent art auction during the Taste of Hamburg-er Festival
- Sponsored an art contest featuring “Hamburgers”
- Coordinated an art raffle fundraiser
- Updated and distributed a Hamburg Area Arts Alliance membership directory
- Participated in the November craft fair held at the Hamburg Area High School
- Hosted a holiday open house in the Art and Craft Gallery
- Received a \$15,000 Rural Arts Grant from the Berks County Community Foundation
- Received a \$3,000 Program Stream Grant from the PA Council of the Arts

2019 Arts Alliance Goals

- Host the Artdrenaline camp and the Hamburg Hoopla event
- Continue our public arts initiative by funding, designing, and creating a 4th public mural and other public art displays in downtown Hamburg
- Augment the ways we utilize the www.hamburgpa.org website to promote the arts by providing e-commerce opportunities for our member artists
- Offer all the activities we have in the past including the silent art auction, an art raffle, featured artist networking events, art classes, and a holiday open house
- Participate in the Hawk Mountain Arts Tour and Spirit of the Holidays Tour
- Improve social media marketing
- Increase foot traffic and sales in the Art & Craft Gallery of Hamburg
- Apply for additional grants through the Berks County Community Foundation and the PA Council on the Arts



Hamburg’s 3rd mural painted on the brick wall at Hamburg Manufacturing

The Hamburg Strand Theater

Our Town Foundation feels that Downtown Hamburg's main attraction should be owned and preserved, not by any individual or company, but by the people of the Hamburg community. With that in mind, on March 28th, 2013 the Our Town Foundation purchased The Hamburg Strand Theater in an effort to preserve and protect this complex as a major asset and attraction in our community.

The building that houses the Hamburg Strand Theatre was built in 1799, and was one of the first properties to be built when the town was laid out. Located at 6 South 4th Street, it was a Federal style house which was later turned into a restaurant before being converted to the theatre in 1920. This historic property needs continuous care to remain a vital cultural center for Hamburg.

Realizing the need for major renovations, Our Town Foundation kicked off a capital campaign in 2014 with a goal of raising \$200,000. This goal was surpassed by the end of 2017! Many improvements have been made over the past five years (listed below) but there is still more to be done.

Theater Renovations/Improvements to Date

- New digital projection system including Dolby surround sound and a new screen
- New insulated roof over theater and garage
- Installed two additional bathrooms on the main level and made additional plumbing improvements
- Refurbished the historic marquee and the exterior entry doors
- Installed new heating/cooling systems in lobby, concession area and party room
- Completed structural repairs to the exterior brick wall
- Stage renovations including laying a hardwood floor
- New flooring in concession area
- Painted both the exterior and the interior of the facility
- Renovations to the 2nd and 3rd floor apartments
- Purchased a new popcorn machine, ice machine, beverage cooler and a point of sale system to allow for credit card purchases
- Installed closed caption devices for the hearing and visually impaired

During 2018, a comprehensive energy audit was completed for the property. The audit was paid for with funds received through the Berks County Community Foundation's Met Ed Sustainable Energy Fund. This 48 page detailed report provided energy saving measures such as replacing all the lighting with LED bulbs, converting to gas heat, improving insulation, and replacing old, exterior doors with new ones. It is the Theater Committee's intent to search for funding sources to implement the suggested improvements during 2019.

Closed caption devices were installed for the hearing and visually impaired in 2018. The devices cost approximately \$4,000; however, the Hamburg Lions Club and the Hamburg Grange #2103 both contributed \$500 to help defray the cost.

Property improvements over the past year included new flooring in the concession and storage areas, painting the party room, repairing the roof of the marquee, installing new soda fountain equipment, and renovating the two apartments above the theater.

Bethany Sholl serves as the Manager of the Strand with assistance from her husband, Jacob, who volunteers his time serving as the projectionist. Bethany's mother, Stephanie Adam, also assists with the management. Under their direction, the theater has seen a 22% growth in ticket sales this past year!

In addition to the featured movies, the theater also offered 30 special movie events, several times to sell-out crowds. Faith Nights and Classic Nights were shown monthly, and children's affairs included an Easter event and Polar Express. Adults flocked to see the annual showing of the Rocky Horror Picture Show and a screening of the Woodstock movie. There were also three live performances offered.

The side room, also referred to as the "party room" was quite busy as well. 51 private parties were held, several art classes were offered, and it served as a meeting room for local groups on many occasions.

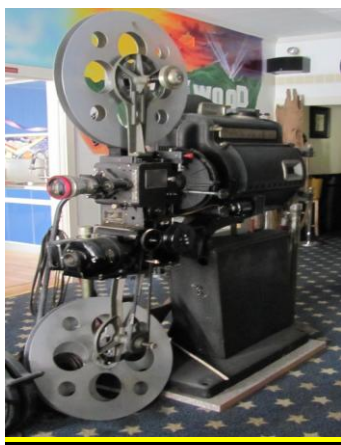
Social media plays a big role in promoting the activities at the Strand. The Hamburg Strand Theater Facebook page has 4423 followers, up from 3645 followers in 2017, an increase of 778, or 21%! The page posts 1-2 times per week posting the upcoming featured attractions, movie trailers, and special events. The Theater's email list also continues to grow. The total number of subscribers at the end of 2018 was 908, an increase of 190 subscribers (over 26%) from the previous year. Emails are sent to all subscribers each week informing them about what is playing at the Strand.

The theater hosts its own website thanks to a Doc Smith, a volunteer on the theater committee who keeps the site current. Here is a glimpse of the theater's website statistics over the past year.

• 48,000 page views	Age breakdown:	
• 38,400 unique visitors	18-24	27.5%
• 27,812 sessions	25-34	33.5%
• 25% returning visitors	35-44	15.5%
• 75% new visitors	45-54	12.5%
• 1.73 average pages per visit	Over 55	11%
• 54 seconds average site visit duration	Gender	
• 66% of visitors are viewing from mobile devices, 27% from desktops and 7% from tablets	Male	54%
	Female	46%

2019 Theater Committee Goals

- Install a new heating/cooling system in the main theater
- Electrical/lighting improvements
- Improve the original bathroom on the main level
- Convert garage area to changing rooms for theatrical performers
- Interior renovations to allow for bistro tables in the rear
- Additional façade improvements (under the marquee)
- Apply for a performing arts liquor license (if we meet LCB requirements)
- Recognize our capital campaign donors on the donor board in the lobby



Left: Original projector on display in theater lobby

Right: Snowy scene captured by local resident, Brian Warfel



Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood

Maple Street to Walnut Street Neighborhood Revitalization Program

Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood Mission: The program aims to sustain an enticing neighborhood that offers a higher quality of life through community ownership, to encourage and stimulate growth and prosperity while maintaining the historical integrity and beauty of the neighborhood setting, and to instill a sense of rebirth and pride amongst those residing in the neighborhood.

Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood Vision: The program will offer a safe and friendly atmosphere for community integration to occur, thus inspiring homeownership and neighborhood empowerment. The convenient accessibility to several major roadways and an abundance of available resources in the downtown will encourage new homebuyers to raise their families in the neighborhood.

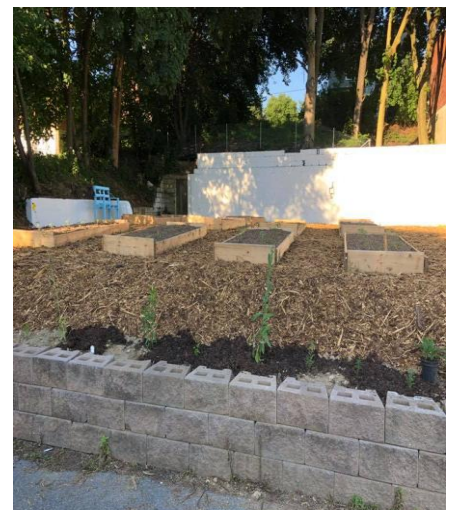
The Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood will enhance the usability of its recreational assets by creating a pedestrian-friendly environment that is both accessible and inviting to multiple generations. Parks, green space, and community gatherings will abound.

The neighborhood will embrace its sense of place – preserving its historical appeal and deep-rooted values while integrating its recent diversity of character.

In 2011, Our Town Foundation received word that we were designated by DCED as an Elm Street community – one of 28 communities in PA to have this designation. The Elm Street neighborhood in Hamburg, named Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood (HSN), consists of 15 blocks at the southern end of town – between Walnut and Maple Streets, including 3rd and 4th streets, and Peach and Primrose Alleys. Receiving the designation allowed us to receive administrative funds to hire a program manager who could focus on neighborhood revitalization.

Unfortunately, 2014 was the last year OTF received funding from DCED for administrative support; however, the Foundation continues to seek grants and search for additional sources of revenue to implement projects within the Southgate Neighborhood.

In March of 2016, Heather Price approached Our Town Foundation to discuss her desire to create a community garden in Hamburg. Board member Vreeland Wood, who also served on the Elm Street Neighborhood Committee, offered a 80' x 60' parcel of land at 420 South 4th Street (Rear) located within the Elm Street corridor for the garden. After three years of planning, prepping, lots of donated supplies and hundreds of hours of volunteer labor, the garden is ready for planting! There are eight plots available for the spring 2019 planting season.



Community garden plots available for spring planting

The Blueprint Community Team: Let's Work Together!

The Team's mission: To provide knowledge, education, and opportunities for social, economical and recreational growth in the Borough of Hamburg.

As a Blueprint Community, our vision is for the Borough of Hamburg to become a premier location to live, work and play.

Formed in 2005, Hamburg's Blueprint Community team consists of representatives from numerous local organizations and businesses who collaboratively seek improvement for the whole borough. The committee members should be considered a strategy board - they are not necessarily the volunteers that complete the projects. The group mainly provides expertise, oversight, and coordination of community projects.

Successful communities are ones that offer a thriving business district, natural recreational opportunities, arts & culture, and a strong educational program. The key to attracting employers to the area is not offering the best incentives, but rather offering a superior quality of life to the employees.

The Blueprint Team's "Action Plan for the Future" details desired projects in eight categories: Recreation, Traffic/Transportation, Arts/Culture/Heritage, Hamburg Pride, Hospitality/Visitor needs, Services and Education, Property Values, and Housing.

Funding for implementation of specific projects is sought from public and private sources such as the PA Department of Community & Economic Development, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the USDA, and the Schuylkill River Heritage Association, as well as County programs such as Community Development Block Grants and the Greater Berks Development Fund.

Major Projects Initiated by the Blueprint Team & Partners since Inception

- Rehab of the blighted Wright's Knitwear building into affordable senior housing
- Formed the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance which manages the Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg
- Created the Native Wildlife Habitat Program (the first to be organized in the state)
- Received funding through the Affordable Housing Program (Provided housing rehab funding for fifteen low to moderate income families)
- Schuylkill River Enhancements – connecting trails, canoe launch, State Street Trailhead parking area, picnic tables along the river
- Expansion of the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum
- Received designation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a Downtown Historic District
- Initiated a Heritage Towns and Tours Program
- Resurrected a Downtown Farmer's Market
- Kernsville Dam improvements including a butterfly garden and adding historical trail markers
- Purchased new holiday decorations for the town
- Redevelopment of the blighted industrial area off of Route 61(in progress)

Physical Improvements / Clean and Green Committee

Committee Goal: To make the downtown more visually aesthetic while preserving its historical integrity and our heritage. The PA Downtown Center said, “Good design conveys a visual message about what your downtown is, and what it has to offer.”

Design is about getting our Borough into top physical shape. Capitalizing on Hamburg’s best assets, such as our historic buildings and traditional downtown layout is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere created through window displays, landscaped parking areas, proper signs, clean sidewalks, and historical street lights conveys a visual message about what Hamburg is and what it has to offer.

2018 Physical Improvement Committee Accomplishments

- Coordinated the Hometown Heroes Banner program, hanging an additional 50 banners throughout the town
- Held two Great American Cleanup events in partnership with local organizations
- Assisted with creating a community garden
- Planted an additional native garden at the Etchberger Community Park
- Partnered with the Arts Alliance in designing the 3rd downtown mural

2019 Physical Improvement Committee Goals

- Continue to host two community cleanups
- Hang additional Hometown Heroes banners
- Rent out the community garden plots
- Make visual improvements to State Street Square (if grant funds are received)
- Seek funding to improve all the gateways into town making them more visually appealing
- Seek funding to design and install historical narrative signs at places of historical interest
- Create pocket parks and seek areas to “green”
- Partner with the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance to coordinate/install additional public art
- Reinstall the fish feeder at the Mill Creek on 3rd Street



Volunteers assisting with the semi-annual Community Cleanup



Native habitat garden being planted at the Etchberger Community Park

Economic Vitality Committee: Building a Better Tomorrow

Committee Goal: To assist in the growth of existing downtown businesses while recruiting new and diverse ones, the whole time encouraging the use of vacant properties. The PA Downtown Center says that “economic vitality means finding new or better purposes for Main Street enterprises.”

Malls and smaller independent stores across America are closing because of the competition with big-box stores and e-commerce. Historic downtowns across the nation need to realize this trend and change their profile if they want to remain a vital community hub. Art and cultural type businesses and activities play an important role in attracting visitors. The Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg, the Hamburg Strand Theatre, the Reading Railroad Heritage museum, two dance studios, B's Sip and Paint, and other businesses embrace the opportunity of growth through art and culture in Hamburg. Natural recreational opportunities are abundant as well; however, Hamburg is currently lacking some of the hospitality type businesses that support people coming to town to utilize our recreational opportunities.

There is change occurring in the area, and while it is sad to see the loss of many of our mom and pop retail stores, (many which were multi-generational) there is economic growth on our horizon. Some of the retail shops have remained retail, and some have converted to service and hospitality type businesses. In early 2018, the Bismarck B & B located on North 4th Street opened its doors to guests. The former Miller's 5 & 10 is now bustling with activity since the opening of the 1787 Brewing Company in May, and a few weeks later the brewery expanded into the former Steinmetz Jeweler's store with their retail merchandise. Bestonium moved to a larger location and shortly thereafter the Lazy Dog Vintage Market opened at Bestonium's former location, 342 State Street.

With the success of the 1787 Brewing Company and the continued upsurge in people attending events and movies at the Hamburg Strand Theater, there is a definite increase in pedestrian traffic in town, especially in the evening hours. Our Town Foundation hopes this trend continues as additional new businesses open their doors in the downtown.

2018 Economic Development Accomplishments

- Hosted networking meetings to improve communications amongst business members
- Maintained accurate list of commercial properties for sale or lease in the borough
- Made personal visits to new businesses in town, welcoming them to the community
- Continued to gather data for a parking study
- Provided assistance to business owners and entrepreneurs as requested
- Maintained the business directory on hamburgpa.org
- Provided information to several business entrepreneurs considering locating in Hamburg

2019 Economic Development Goals

- Host networking meetings at local businesses
- Be proactive with our recruitment efforts; direct contact with entrepreneurs, informing local economic development agencies of our desired businesses, etc.
- Complete the parking study and distribute data to the borough and local businesses
- Identify roadblocks to business entrepreneurs within the Borough and work towards eliminating the roadblocks
- Work closely with the Borough to ensure everyone has the same vision and goals for the community

Community Marketing: It's All About Image

Committee Goal: To promote the town as a social, cultural, and economic center by marketing the charm and unique characteristics that Hamburg offers. The PA Downtown Center states that "promotion means selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects, including residents, visitors, shoppers, and entrepreneurs."

Downtown Hamburg serves as a hub for commerce, culture and community life. We are fortunate to have numerous natural recreational assets surround us, as well as many local historical attractions. A positive image of a town is the most important factor in revitalizing any town. Image will determine a community's potential for vitality and prosperity. The Community Marketing Committee strives to promote a positive image of Hamburg – one that offers plentiful goods and services, a variety of activities, a positive attitude, a beautiful environment, and a quality of life that people seek when choosing a location to live.

There are several types of marketing that must be done for the town to be successful:

1. Market to the local residents – we must educate the locals on what Hamburg has to offer and on the importance of supporting their local economy.
2. Market to tourists – we must determine who our potential shoppers are, what they are looking for, who the competition is, and then promote our assets to these visitors.
3. Market to business entrepreneurs – we must identify targeted businesses and persuade them to establish a business or expand in the Hamburg area.

In order to do this, we must constantly develop new strategies in this ever-changing market.

1. Provide events and activities to bring people to town
2. Embrace social media in all forms
3. Market the existing assets of the town and the surrounding areas – don't try to be something we are not
4. Promote our heritage and cultural resources

Community Marketing is not all about promoting the businesses – it also needs to promote the Foundation. We are aware that after many years of existence, there are still some people in the community that are not aware of everything we do and the benefits of supporting the organization. This committee - along with the Board of Directors - continues to spread the word of our accomplishments.

The following outlines Our Town Foundation's regular marketing strategies for promoting Hamburg to showcase its attractions and resources to residents and visitors.

E-mail newsletters These attractive email blasts have allowed us to get information to our members and other subscribers faster! In 2018, we sent a total of 16 newsletters to 2,631 "Hamburg Happenings" subscribers – an increase of 155 subscribers in 2018. The newsletters included information on major Hamburg events and promotions.

Press releases and media alerts are sent to 16 print, online, and radio media sources. This alerts them of our items of interest so they can post the information on their website, write an article in their publication, announce it on the radio, or be present at one of our upcoming events.

Social Media has been in full swing over the past year! Our Town Foundation officially manages five Facebook pages including Hamburg PA, Taste of Hamburger Festival, The Hamburg Strand Theater, Art of the Brew, and the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance.

“Hamburg, PA” is Our Town Foundation’s primary **Facebook page**. It currently has 2396 followers, up from 2072 followers at the beginning of 2018 (an increase of 15%) Posts include local event flyers from Hamburg community organizations, OTF events, and other general Hamburg items of interest. The statistics for Hamburg, PA’s Facebook Page averaged over the past year:

- 523 posts made in 2018, up from 495 posts in 2017
- 217,207 total reach from all posts, up from 216,066 in 2017
- 16,967 likes or comments, up from 11,059 in 2017, an increase of 5,908 or 53%

Online Calendars are another way to reach audiences within certain interest groups or a geographic region. Our Town Foundation uploads its events and other main Hamburg events to 13 online event calendars.

Brochures are a key way we connect with visitors to the area. Brochure distribution is performed by staff to hit a wide range of locations including nearby attractions, restaurants, offices, banks, and shops, totaling 120 locations. In addition, larger brochure kiosks that hold information regarding nearby attractions, as well as selected business member and organizational member brochures are located at the OTF office, Cabela’s retail store and the Microtel Hotel.

Our Town Foundation has created the following brochures: The Hamburg Area Visitor’s Guide, “101 Fun Things to do in and around Hamburg”, a Historic Hamburg architectural walking tour, and Historic Hamburg “Discover our Past”. In addition, OTF has created brochures promoting the various facets of our organization including The Art and Craft Gallery of Hamburg, The Hamburg Area Arts Alliance, and Hamburg Southgate Neighborhood brochures.

Poster Delivery is another avenue of marketing the Foundation utilizes for its events. Posters are regularly distributed to the downtown businesses. Larger special events posters are distributed to an additional eighty nearby locations.

A quarterly insert in the Hamburg Item called “*Our Town News*” is a three page newsletter that announces Our Town Foundation news including upcoming events, new initiatives, grant funding, etc. The insert is distributed to all *Hamburg Item* subscribers, which has a circulation of approximately 2,000 and is also sent to Our Town Foundation members.

The **Hamburgpa.org website** is one stop shop for all local Hamburg businesses and attractions, serving as an online directory of local resources. The site was revamped in 2016 to make it more mobile friendly.

Our Hamburg, PA **Twitter** account posted 20 tweets in 2018. Tweets mimic Hamburg, PA Facebook posts. There are currently 662 followers, a small increase over the 639 followers in 2017.

Participating in tourism expos and community events is also a great way to introduce visitors to our many community assets. Personal communication and visual displays are a benefit in attracting visitors.



Find us on
Facebook



Our Town Foundation

2018 Volunteer of the Year

Ann Steffel

Every year during the Annual Meeting, OTF announces the “Volunteer of the Year”. This person is selected based on the number of volunteer hours completed in the calendar year and overall reliability and attitude demonstrated while completing tasks. Special consideration is given to those volunteers that serve on more than one committee. This year Ann Steffel, co-owner of Lab Services, was bestowed with the award.

Ann serves on the Board of Directors as well as the Hamburg Area Arts Alliance Committee. This past year she also assisted with the inaugural Artdrenaline Camp by serving on the committee, being on site and assisting the teachers with the activities all three days of the camp, and setting up and tearing down. That same week she volunteered her time to help with the food stand at Hamburg Hoopla, a one day music festival held downtown. She even recruited her husband and daughter to volunteer!



Other events she volunteered for during the year include the annual Art of the Brew Beer Fest, the annual Taste of Hamburg-er Festival (working many shifts during the day) and several Art Alliance functions. She also spent many hours proofreading a cookbook created by the Arts Alliance committee.

Not only does Ann give her time, she also supports the foundation financially. Her business sponsored our Taste of Hamburg-er Festival, the Art of the Brew Fest, the Animal House interactive movie event, and the Artdrenaline camp. She also sponsored a child who may not have been able to attend the camp without her support.

During our fundraising activities, Ann goes above and beyond with her support. She sold 73 gun raffle tickets this past year and whenever we have our chicken and pork BBQ dinners she buys tickets for her entire staff.

“I respect Ann for her commitment to our organization. I enjoy her presence, as she is always so pleasant to be around and she is willing to do whatever is asked of her. She and her husband regularly attend our networking mixers and other activities we host showing she takes her position on the Board of Directors to heart,” says Deena Kershner, Director of the Foundation.

A special thanks to Ann for her dedication to the Foundation and the Community. Ann is an individual that truly makes a difference.

WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

- **Shop locally**
- **Volunteer for events and other activities**
- **Serve on a committee**
- **Support the program financially**
- **Make suggestions for improvements**
- **Inform borough representatives and neighboring representatives of the importance of their continued support**
- **Share your knowledge of the program with others**

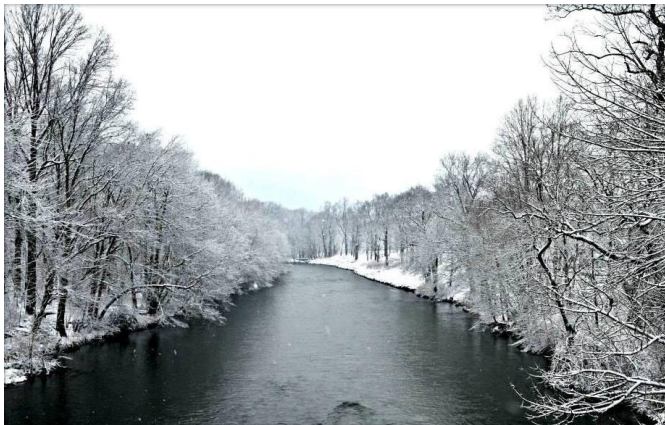
Your energy, funding, and commitment will help leave a vibrant and tangible legacy for our community and all who pass through it for generations to come.

For questions in regards to this report, or to discuss any revitalization issues please contact:

**Our Town Foundation Office
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Hamburg, PA 19526
610-562-3106
otfmanager@aol.com**



Additional information on the community can be found on the web at
www.hamburgpa.org



Natural recreational opportunities abound in the area.