



*Progress Authority*

**Meet NTCC's Executive Director**

Gary Martell

Gary Martell currently serves as the Executive Director of the Northern Tier Career Center. NTCC provides quality Career and Technical education to 400 youth in eight school districts and participating adult of Bradford and Sullivan Counties. The Northern Tier Career Center offers continuing education for adult students including CDL truck driving training, and License Practice Nursing.

Mr. Martell enters the Director's position with over twenty years of experience in education. From 2012-2015, Mr. Martell served as the Jr/Sr. High School Principal of Northeast Bradford School District. Prior to working for North-



east Bradford, Mr. Martell held the position of assistant principal for the Towanda Area School District. In addition to his administration positions he enjoyed teaching ju-

nior high mathematics for fourteen years. Gary earned his Bachelors of Science Degree in Education from Lock Haven University and Master's Degree from Wilkes University. He later obtained his principal's certificate from California University of Pennsylvania, as well as his Vocational Administration Director.

Mr. Martell resides in Leroy Township with his wife, Amy and three children (Mason 21 (University of Pittsburgh), Kaden 19 (Misericordia University), and Carmya 16). The Martell's are active community members who enjoy athletics, travel and outdoor activities. They attend Building 103 Church in Canton.

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## A Message from the Director

Anthony J. Ventello



I am truly excited about the opportunities that lie before us. Through our ongoing interface with our businesses and industries indications of continued investment is encouraging. However, two critical issues remain top priorities to address. They are workforce and connectivity.

I am unable to prioritize one over the other. Every business we interview emphasizes the need to acquire qualified reliable employees. This exists at all levels of employment. In an effort to facilitate this need, the Progress Authority has interfaced with Bradford County's Career and Technical Center. Fortunately, the director, Gary Martell's, board of directors are the school district superintendents from Bradford County's seven school districts, plus Sullivan County. This is a perfect venue to interface secondary school leaders with area businesses of all sizes. Over 16 sessions were held with fabulous dialogue focusing on workforce needs and education. The message was clear: educators and businesses need to work closer together and I believe we are at a point where that can happen to benefit all those involved, especially creating opportunities for our future workforce. We continue to focus on critical elements to develop solutions for our businesses.

I am equally excited about the gains made with our county's poor connectivity situation. With the support of the Bradford County Commissioners, great gains have been accomplished. We have formulated a "dream team" to address the development of a dark fiber network. Through the expertise of our own Chris Brown (financial), Zach Gates (legal), Darin Rathbun and Ryan Garrison (engineering), and the mastermind Darren Roy (inter-

be greatly improved if not eliminated with an appropriate public/private partnership committed to true middle mile development.

The Progress Authority completed initial Phase I engineering studies to develop an open access network to construct the necessary fiber optic middle mile. With the development of redundant dark fiber loops, a long-lasting, self-healing backbone to support all means of communication can be established. Emergency services, microwaves, cell tower services and wireless communication will be directly strengthened with a well-positioned, impactfully sized fiber optic network. There is no substitute for fiber optics as the foundation to support numerous forms of communication with unlimited capacity. Because of this fact, fiber optics and technology, backed by fiber are and will continue to be the highest and best uses of funds for broadband development.

net provider) we have made great strides towards putting our fiber optic network in the air.

The Progress Authority received information from the Pennsylvania Office of Broadband Initiative who commissioned a study of rural broadband service as a result of Governor Wolf's efforts to tour counties and identify rural issues. Inadequate rural broadband is a primary concern. The state study identified both Bradford and Susquehanna Counties as the worst areas for adequate broadband connectivity throughout the Commonwealth. The lack of true middle mile fiber optics is the root of the problem. Poor service threatens rural public safety, access to government, healthcare, business development, educational services, and activities of daily living. Economic development is especially challenged given our rural geographic size and population. Our agricultural industry also struggles with inadequate service. Rural citizens, governments, schools and businesses have no less need for quality, reliable broadband than anyone else. Rural communities pay as much or more for the poor service, thus incentivizing rural providers to not invest. It is the opinion of the Progress Authority and the participating counties that our rural broadband dilemma will

The Progress Authority has received PUC approval to proceed with the plan. The Progress Authority has requested \$5,000,000 in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Projects (RACP) funding and secured \$5,000,000 in local match from the Bradford County Commissioners to satisfy the estimated project cost of \$10,000,000. We are also looking at USDA program funding. The Progress Authority would be unable to have accomplished this without substantial support from the Bradford County Commissioners.

As always, I am thankful for the Progress Authority staff and board of directors and support from the public and private sectors. I remain committed to the economic development of Bradford County and invite new challenges.

# Broadband Deployment: The Fifth Utility

## Bradford County "Dark Fiber" Project

Darin Rathbun—Hunt Engineers, Architects and Surveyors

In today's connected world of smart devices and the internet of things, intellectual knowledge and everyday conveniences have become more available than ever...to some at least. There is still a large divide between those communities where internet connectivity is available at affordable prices and those where it is not available or too costly for the average household. Internet connectivity affects all aspects of the community such as local government, education, business and economic development, as well as making our communities attractive places to live for upcoming generations.



For this reason, it has become known as the Fifth Utility – think electricity, water/sewer, gas, and telephones, and communities around the state are struggling to ensure they don't fall behind. Plain and simple, internet is no longer a luxury had by a few, it is a necessity to learn and communicate with the rest of the world.

For example, our public safety infrastructure is vital. Bradford County needs a stable, redundant and reliable network for our 911 call center and connections to our communication towers. Lost or dropped calls are unacceptable and recent events have shown how important communications are during natural disasters.

Educators are building curriculums tailored to the 21st Century learning environment, posting content, and seeking to directly interact with parents and students before and after school hours; thus, putting stu-

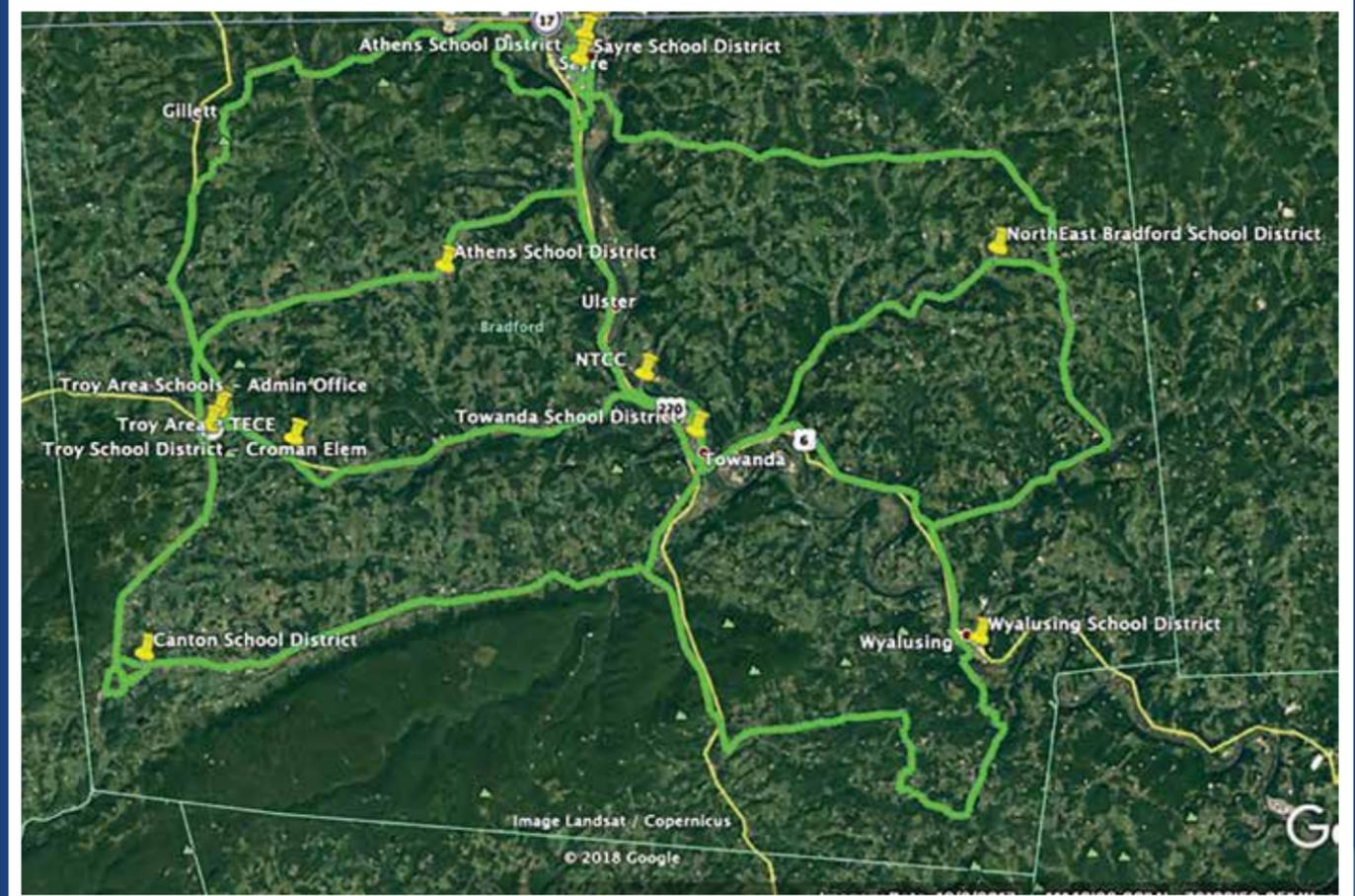
dents beyond their digital reach at a measurable disadvantage. The shortfalls aren't limited to public schools.

Private businesses in these underserved areas find it difficult to provide services that customers expect -- for example, free Wi-Fi and credit card transactions that elsewhere are considered commonplace. These disadvantages limit businesses' ability to compete and expand and serve as a disincentive to even opening in the first place. Moreover, an increasing number of businesses and social service providers are requiring clients to do their business only on-line. Again, either adding costly complexity to the have-nots or inadvertently knocking them out of the system.

As this demand increased, both state and federal entities have recognized this as an issue of the utmost importance and dedicated subsidies to service providers. In an effort similar to the Rural Electrification

Act of 1936, they have provided grants and loans to service providers to deliver bandwidth to unserved households. Today, most unserved areas are primarily in rural areas due to the financial restrictions of private, for-profit service providers, who have a hard time "justifying" a distribution plan to an area with so few customers. To further complicate the funding model, areas described as "served" are determined by using census blocks as a whole -- wherein even just one household served within that block classifies the census block to be served and thus ineligible for funding. This information is provided by the incumbent providers along with an assigned speed that is the theoretical maximum of the installed technology. Actual metered bandwidth information is often not available, and the actual speeds are often a fraction of the claimed speeds.

These funding models can



quickly lead a county, town, village, or municipality to discover that they either qualify for funding but are at the mercy of a willing service provider, or do not qualify for funding because a small corner of a census block is claimed to be served.

To take control of the future for their county residents, the Bradford County Commissioners have displayed foresight and energized the discussion of high-speed internet in our community. They have entrusted the Progress Authority to organize a team that includes the best possible cross-section of individuals who understand and have developed a truly redundant self-healing, fiber-optic middle-mile that will enhance the county's public safety network, provide access to school districts, reach out to areas of industry, farms and commercial properties and spark interest in internet service providers to provide high-speed access to homes.

TPA's team consisting of Hunt

Engineers & Architects, Gate's Law Office and RuralNET Communications have attacked and solved some of the rural broadband dilemmas. Over 2000 poles were surveyed, per-



*Tony Ventello emphasizing the need for broadband improvements with Governor Wolf.*

mits submitted and subsequently reviewed as part of the Phase 1 loop. The Dark Fiber team developed a great working relationship with Pe-nelec during the pole permit review process and streamlined the process utilizing cutting edge technology for the relay of data, information and communication.

While some specific areas of design are still being addressed, expectations to start building the first leg of the Phase 1 loop is anticipated during the summer of 2019. Pole surveys for the phase 2 and 3 loops are anticipated to start late spring and permit applications prepared and submitted concurrently. All three loops consist of approximately 270 miles of fiber. Discussions and presentations are occurring with anchor clients and internet service providers (i.e. Last Mile Providers) to educate and inform them on what is happening and what the proposed schedules are.

## Superintendents Listen to Local Employers

Dr. Jason M. Bottiglieri

*Wyalusing Area School District, Superintendent of Schools  
Northern Tier Career Center, Superintendent of Record*

Relationship building seen as the key to the region's future. Since the fall of 2018, thanks to the leadership team of the Progress Authority, Tony Ventello, Executive Director and Chris Brown, Economic Development Specialist, business and school leaders exchanged visionary perspectives on how best to enhance the employability of graduating students. By bringing some of the region's top employers into the Northern Tier Career Center (NTCC),

school leaders were able to highlight the various technical training programs that support the 10,000 students in Bradford and Sullivan Counties. The NTCC is a hidden gem of our region and we wanted to be able to showcase the facility and strengthen the relationships between business and education so that regional employers had a more clear understanding of the high quality technical training programs offered to students. Each year the NTCC produces more than 200 students that are primed to enter the workforce with a skill set that is very attractive to regional employers.



Superintendents listen to local employers. Community business leaders provided a perspective that allowed superintendents to understand the needs of their business. Specifically, employers expressed the need for a talent pool to fulfil the various employment opportunities that exist around the Bradford County region. The concept

behind building these professional relationships between school and employer is for schools to respond to the growing demand for a skilled workforce. Throughout a nine-month rotation, local business leaders expressed a need for schools to respond to the growing need of general employability skills as this was the most common requested trait from employers. School leaders have responded to this request and have embraced the need for enhanced soft skill training opportunities for students. Items such as interviewing skills, public speaking, professional conduct and work place standards, work ethic and very simply, factors that foster good relationships between employee and employer are programs that schools have begun to implement in our region as a take away from our business meetings.

Business leaders learn from educators. The relationship established between educators and businesses was successful for both partners. Superintendents made a commitment to work collaboratively with businesses by ensuring the

trades offered at the NTCC are current and meet industry standards as well as remain progressive. The current state mandate for all career and technical centers requires the incorporation of an Occupational Advisory Committee (OAC). The main purpose of an OAC is to strengthen the career and technical education programs by making recommendations for program improvement and providing technical assistance to assure the most up-to-date curriculum content and appropriate applications of technology. Additionally, Superintendents were able to highlight the numerous state requirements associated with making change in our public school system, detailed the limitations, and the stringent rules that encompass public education from the

legislature. Business leaders appreciated the counter-perspective as our conversations provided insight into the world of each arena. Thank you Progress Authority. The commitment from both Tony and Chris has proven to be beneficial to students and business / school leaders as we work collaboratively to provide an opportunity for students to begin their journey into the workforce. We all remain committed to providing opportunities for students that foster success to earn a competitive wage that meets the needs of employers in our region.

## We Can be Bullish on Agriculture

Mark Madden

Recently released data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture highlights the significance of agricultural production in Bradford County and the critical fiber agriculture is in the fabric of our local economy. Compiled by the National Agricultural Statistics Service



within the USDA, the census conducted every 5yrs accounts for all U.S. farms and ranches down to the county level and tells the story over time of agriculture and of those who operate those businesses.

A quick analysis reveals several local trends in terms of productivity and enterprise diversification. It also speaks to the increasing efficiency, wise management and adaptability of our local producers. Within the county we have 1450 operations selling agricultural commodities of all types with sales totaling \$132.5 M. Compared to 2012 when we had 200 fewer farms recorded, our 2017 sales climbed over \$4M. Noteworthy trends include the burgeoning hog production doubling in farm number since 2012 and reaching sales over \$28M - up from \$9.5M over the last 10yrs. Its also apparent our grain sales, soybean acreage most notably, have mounted several million dollars over the period.

Given our wealth of rural underutilized farmland and proximity to the vast number of consumers within a day's truck delivery including access to international-bound ports along the eastern seaboard, we can expect continued interest in opportunities for livestock and poultry production.

There is concern nationally and locally for the financial health of

the dairy sector that is enduring several years of considerable economic stress brought about by the dynamics of the market. Dairy accounts for more than 40% of our agricultural receipts in Bradford County and is by far the most prominent agricultural sector.

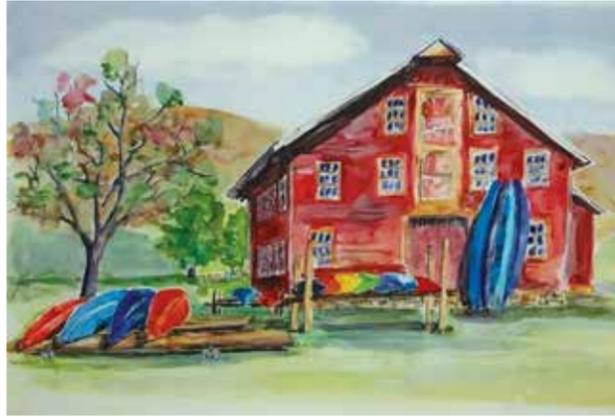
It has been customary for the dairy industry to cycle economically in a somewhat predictable manner enabling wieldy producers to manage accordingly, but the current downturn has persisted over the last 5yrs and the drop in dairy farm numbers from 240 to 190 illustrates that hardship.

On the forward side, we're positioned to take great advantage of a market upturn. Improved production brought about by increases in milk/cow and other factors, and despite the lower prices received at the farm gate, dairy sales have remained stable at about \$55M - dollars that cycle in our community many times over. Pennsylvania is characterized as being overly subject to the fluid milk market and efforts are underway to facilitate in-state value-added opportunities to market milk. While fluid consumption is down, we are consuming more cheese and other processed dairy products.

Agriculture, as USDA's reporting clearly shows, remains a vital economic component of our area and Penn State Extension and all of us can be bullish on our agricultural prospects. As producers, consumers and community leaders, we all share in the responsibility to be agriculturally literate so that our consumptive choices and the decisions we collectively make advances all of us.



# Revolving



The Progress Authority's Revolving Loan Fund was set up as an economic development tool to assist businesses with their financing needs. The intention of the fund is to strengthen a financing package while taking a subordinate lien position behind a primary lending institution. Special consideration is given to projects that have more job creation. The rate is usually advantageous and the term is dependent on the type of collateral. The Progress Authority is a certified Area Lending Organization (ALO) as an Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and General-Purpose Authority. We have a 20 member board who were appointed by our member municipalities and wear 3 hats representing the 3 separate entities. Our board is the same for the IDC, IDA and General-Purpose Authority.

- General Guidelines**
- Loan Size: \$25,000 to \$100,000 (Special consideration is given to projects with larger job creation)
  - Collateral: Subordinate Lien Position on Real Estate, Equipment, Personal Guaranty is customary.
  - Term: Equipment- up to 5 years  
Real Estate- up to 10 years
  - Rate: Based on collateral and term.

The Loan Committee underwrites each loan request and makes a recommendation to the Executive Committee and Full Board of Directors for a final vote. If the loan is approved, the borrower's legal counsel coordinates closing with the authority's legal counsel when all closing requirements have been met. Loan payments are

# Loan Fund

subsequently made to a local bank that administers the Authority's loan fund. Applications are available online at [www.cbprogress.org](http://www.cbprogress.org).

## Not-For-Profit Loan Fund

Not-For-Profit organizations are founded for public benefit and operate to accomplish a well-defined mission. This mission is accomplished through the efficient operation of various programs and services. Non-Profits are managed by a board of directors. The non-profit should have at least 5 years of experience doing similar work or the principal officer should have at least 5 years of experience in the non-profit's mission area.

A borrower's strength is based on the following characteristics:

- Mission
- Governance
- Fiscal Responsibility

## General Guideline for the Not-For-Profit Loan Program

- Loan Size: \$25,000 to \$500,000 (depending on amount of funding available)
- Collateral: Subordinate Lien Position on Real Estate or Equipment is customary.
- Term: Equipment- up to 5 years  
Real Estate- up to 5 years
- Rate: Based on investment rate set by Bradford County.

## 2018 In Review

2018 was an exciting year for the Progress Authority Revolving Loan Fund and Not-For-Profit Loan Fund. \$1,534,000.00 were lent to

private businesses and not for profit entities throughout Bradford County. These funds helped leverage over \$1,550,000.00 in private investment while creating 30 jobs and retaining over 97 jobs. The mix of industries that benefited from these loan funds was widely diverse. From Agriculture to Manufacturing, Tourism to Community Mental Health, the Progress Authority was able to help fund all of these projects.



# PA Engage!

Engage! is a Pennsylvania state-wide business retention and expansion (BRE) program designed to regularly and proactively interact with targeted companies. The overall goal of Engage! is to retain existing businesses in a community and to help them grow and expand by building solid relationships with business owners or key decision makers and economic development partners and their representatives. Engage! is intended to regularly interact with companies for purposes of:

- Identifying needs and matching resources to help existing busi-

nesses and industries address their challenges to become more competitive and successful.

- Demonstrating to local businesses and industries that the community recognizes and depends on their contributions to the local/state economy.
- Building community capacity to sustain growth and development.
- Understanding and addressing the common themes articulated by PA businesses in order to drive policy and the menu of the Department of Communi-

ty and Economic Development (DCED) and partner services for long range business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts.

As economic development providers in our region, The Progress Authority has fostered relationships with the many existing businesses and industries through consistent performance and trust. We have been their allies and advocates for years. The Progress Authority is excited to utilize our existing business relationships in Bradford County to achieve the goals of the Engage! Program.

## Occupancy of Progress Plaza Reaches 100%



2018 was an exciting year for the Progress Plaza Building. Occupancy has reached 100% for the first time since the flood in 2011. The building welcomed new tenants from a variety of fields. From mental health services, to social services and grant coordination the new support offered at Progress Plaza is truly a benefit to Bradford County. Welcome Avant Wellness, Caring Communities, Penn York Opportunities, and Bradford County Grant Coordinator!

## What it's like to be an Intern at the Progress Authority

David Boardman

While interning at The Progress Authority, I have had the opportunity to take part in many projects that effect the area I live in. My part may not have been the largest, but it was still exciting to be part of the projects that will help benefit my community. For example, in order to successfully construct the gas-to-liquids facility in Wyalusing, Pa, Black and Veatch had to be sure they could properly house their workers in the area. I, along with a former intern, Robert, were tasked with gathering housing information within a 50-mile radius of the jobsite. While this job came off as insignificant and tedious, if the company did not have this information the project might not have been able to move forward as smoothly as it did. If the project did not move forward, Bradford County could have missed out hundreds of jobs and career opportunities.

My internship at the Progress Authority has also helped me improve upon my soft skills. Between attending meetings with people such as the Bradford County Commis-



sioners, board members, and even the Governor of Pennsylvania, I now have a better idea of what it is like to act like a professional. Skills such as properly shaking someone's hand and attentively listening were skills I had prior to the internship, but I now understand the importance of them.

Working for the Progress Authority has helped me improve my

work ethic dramatically. In high school, assignment deadlines were loose to some degree. In college and in the working world, it is the exact opposite. Having the opportunity to work for a group where a missed deadline for a grant application, for example, could mean missing out on thousands of dollars. I now feel confident with my newly sharpened skills and knowledge in moving forward in my academic career as I work toward my degree.

Lastly, the Central Bradford Progress Authority has allowed me to see behind the scenes of what goes on in my community. I am a firm believer in being active in the community you live in and I could not think of a better place to do that than here. Growing up, I never knew about any-

thing happening in my area until it happened. When I started at the Progress Authority, it fascinated me seeing what all takes place before a project is completed. I had no idea what it took to start a business, completing a grant application, issue a loan until I became an intern.



*Progress Authority*

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Christopher Brown, Economic Development Manager  
Kim Fairchild, Administrative Assistant

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