

## . . . on the JOB

Update for members & strategic partners  
April 2008

If opportunity doesn't knock - build a door.  
Milton Berle

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### Bruce and Merrilees at 60 — Big, but not too big!



In its 60 years as the premier electrical contractor in Lawrence County, Bruce & Merrilees has been involved in a number of successful large and complex projects all over the United States. Even so, the firm continues to cater to the needs of smaller, local businesses, as well.

"We never forgot who helped us grow," noted Justin Bruce, the third generation to work in the business begun by his grandfather, Howard Bruce, in 1948. "We continue to perform local contract work, as well as offer around-the-clock emergency service."

Headquartered in New Castle, Bruce & Merrilees provides innovative electrical installation and maintenance services for projects of all sizes – from the small to the large and complex. The *Engineering News Record* named Bruce & Merrilees one of the Top 600 Specialty Contractors in the United States. The firm has also been recognized as one of the top 100 electrical contractors in the nation.

Among the advantages of operating a business in Lawrence County is the convenient location and the attractive cost of living and doing business. The company is challenged, however, by a dearth of qualified prospective employees.

"People complain that our bright young people leave because we don't have quality jobs in Lawrence County," added Justin. "That's just not the case. We have a need for a larger pool of qualified engineers and other professional positions."

To help alleviate that situation, the company created the H. Bruce Group University. Founded in 2002, HBGU offers continuing education for employees, including up to 7000 hours of annual training in working safely, technology innovations, professionalism, project management, customer service, and the company vision and mission.

Today, Bruce & Merrilees is operated by the third generation including Jay, Jonathan and Justin Bruce. The Bruce family, and all Bruce & Merrilees employees, regularly give back to the community through active participation in community events and organizations. In addition to LCEDC and the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, Bruce & Merrilees is involved with the Relay for Life, the Boy Scouts of America, Jameson Hospital, Lark Enterprises, the YMCA, and Westminster College.

For more information on Bruce & Merrilees, visit [www.bruceandmerrilees.com](http://www.bruceandmerrilees.com).

## **Planning to sell overseas? Protect your intellectual property.**

Businesses that market their products overseas run the risk of losing the protections provided by the U.S. Patent Office. But there are steps a business can take to protect itself, according to Jon L. Woodard, a registered patent attorney for the Erie firm of MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton, LLP. Woodward recently led a round-table session at Meet the Pros held in Erie on April 1. Diane Lynn Richardson, Assistant Director of LCEDC, attended the educational event sponsored by the Northwest Commission.

Among the steps recommended are: document your invention; engage a law firm to conduct a patent search, and file for patents on your behalf in both the U.S. and internationally via the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

## **Looking for more space?**

### **Check out this month's featured site.**



Shenango Township site offers between 5000 and 385,000 square feet of space suitable for heavy manufacturing. The property can be divided to suit special needs, and is available for purchase or lease.

All properties available in Lawrence County can be found under the "What we offer/Sites and Facilities" tab on the LCEDC web site—[www.lawrencecounty.com](http://www.lawrencecounty.com). Or call the LCEDC office.

## **BREP database gets up-grade to provide more useful information.**

The database maintained by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development—Executive Pulse—has been up-graded to be more helpful in our efforts to identify useful resources of value to business in Lawrence County, and to allow the state to have a better understanding of the economic issues that impact business.

The Executive Pulse database is an important component of the Business Retention and Expansion Program (BREP). It contains aggregate data on over 180 Lawrence County companies, in addition to companies in every county in the state. These are companies that are visited by John DiMuccio every year as a means of maintaining a close connection with our local businesses.

During his visits, John completes a detailed questionnaire on each company about such items as marketing and sales, machinery, equipment and production; site and facility; infrastructure; business climate; workforce and economic development resources. Using the data, John generates a customer action plan and sends it to a team of specialists familiar with the company's unique needs, e.g., workforce, web marketing or project financing. The action plan is analyzed, and followed up with recommendations for ways LCEDC, and others can help.

The newly improved system now allows for keyword searches to better identify potential programs of benefit to the business, and enables state officials to stay better informed about pressing business issues, such as the high cost of health care, corporate income taxes, etc. This program is a valuable tool for both local and state economic development efforts because it provides a strong link between the public and private sectors with the goal of retaining and growing local business and the jobs those businesses have created. This is the first phase of a two phase improvement to the system. The next upgrade is scheduled for July 2008.

### **Brown Bag Lunch Explains Internet Marketing.**

If PPC, SEO or Div Tags mean absolutely nothing to you, you are not alone. Those terms, and a host of others, were explained to the attendees at the second LCEDC Brown Bag Lunch on April 2nd. Neal Rabogliatti, an Internet expert from Catalyst Connection, discussed the many acronyms and buzz words every business owner who uses the Web as a marketing tool should know. He presented a number of tools to help businesses move closer to the top of a web search list.

The next Brown Bag Lunch will feature survival strategies for today's economy. Watch your e-mail for the date. Brown Bag Lunch events are held at the LCEDC office, with lunch provided. Cost is \$10 for LCEDC members, and \$15 for non-members.



### **Help us market Lawrence County.**

Everyone has, on occasion, an opportunity to help market Lawrence County to prospective residents and businesses. In addition to the web site, LCEDC has printed materials on a variety of subjects. These materials are available for use by any member. Just give us a call, tell us what kind of information you need, and we'll put it together in a custom presentation folder for you.

### **Educational opportunities**

#### **King Conversion: Web Sites that Sell Conference**

Do you want to generate more revenue through your Web site? Do you want to convert leads into sales? The impact that the Internet and e-commerce have on business and the economy is incredibly significant. Almost every business needs to be using the online channel to profitably find new markets, generate leads, convert and retain customers.

By attending this conference, you will gain insights from the leaders in online marketing and persuasion architecture to find creative ways and new approaches to make your web site an important part of your marketing strategy. Attendees will learn techniques to develop an online persuasive strategy, how to create calls to action to move toward a close, converting leads to sales and more!

Sponsored by the Center for eBusiness and Advanced IT (eBizITPA)

April 17, 2008 / 8 a.m.—3:30 p.m. / Bayfront Convention Center, Erie, PA / Cost—\$129

To register, or for more information, visit [www.ebizitpa.org](http://www.ebizitpa.org) or call (814)898-6500.

## Introduction to RFID

This course provides an overview of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology and capabilities, and features hands-on demonstrations using cutting-edge RFID readers, antennas and tags. Supply chain and operations professionals, company executives, IT managers and developers, IT solution providers and consultants can all benefit from course participation.

Sponsored by the Center for eBusiness and Advanced IT (eBizITPA)

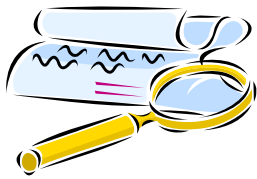
April 30, 2008 / 1 to 5 p.m.

Penn State Behrend, Research and Economic Development Center (REDC), Room 236, Erie, PA

Cost: \$99

Instruction provided by the RFID Center of Excellence at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College.

To register, or for more information, visit [www.ebizitpa.org](http://www.ebizitpa.org) or call (814)898-6500.



## Government 201: GSA Schedule Training

Becoming a GSA Schedule Contractor can provide an advantage when pursuing federal contracts. Helena Koch, Office of Small Business Utilization, will provide an in-depth overview of the GSA Schedule process. This half-day event will include a brief overview of GSA, the process of getting on GSA's Schedule, how to access government solicitations, how to submit an offer, and the evaluation and award process. Under the GSA Schedules Program, GSA establishes long-term government-wide contracts with commercial firms to provide access to over 11 million commercial products and services that can be ordered directly from GSA Schedule contractors.

May 22, 2008 / Northwest Commission, Oil City / 8:30 — noon

Hosted by Northwest Commission. For more information, or to register contact Lori Kenyon at [lorik@nwcommission.org](mailto:lorik@nwcommission.org) or at 814-677-4800 x104.

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