

2026

FOCUS CENTRAL PA
INDUSTRIAL
DEVELOPMENT FORUM

SPEAKER
BIOGRAPHIES

Wednesday, March 11TH, 2026 – 8:30am to 4:30pm
Nittany Lion Inn: 200 W Park Ave, State College PA 16803

2026 Industrial Development Forum Emcee

Carolyn L. Donaldson, VP, Community Engagement & Relationships Development Officer, Kish Bank



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VP, Community Engagement & Relationship Development Officer
Kish Bank

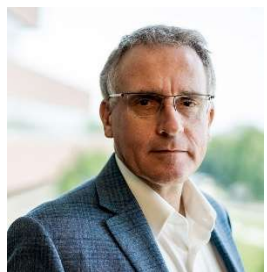
Carolyn's message is one of community-building, outreach and engagement and her professional and personal goals work to match the community spirit of each of us contributing to help the greater good. Carolyn serves as Vice President, Community Engagement and Relationship Development for Kish Bank, a regional community bank serving 5 counties in Central PA. In this role, she directs the philanthropic and community engaging events, programs and sponsorships of the bank including coordinating and amplifying the community service work of its nearly 300 Kish Bank



team members. In her previous role at WPSU, a Penn State Outreach Service, Carolyn led the Community Engagement efforts of this public media station. From 1995 to 2016, Carolyn served as a news reporter and anchor for the regional CBS-affiliate WTAJ-TV sharing the news stories of Central PA and building community as host, emcee and active participant in many local and regional organizations. A Magna cum laude graduate of Siena Heights University in Adrian, MI, Carolyn has completed coursework in Penn State's Master's Media Studies program in the Donald E. Bellisario College of Communications. Carolyn serves on several regional boards including the Altoona Symphony, WPSU, The Central PA Festival of the Arts, Special Olympics PA, and as a Trustee of Mount Aloysius College.

Industrial Development Forum Welcome

Dr. Andrew Read, Senior Vice President of Research, Penn State



Andrew Read, Ph.D, Senior Vice President for Research, Evan Pugh University
Professor of Biology and Entomology
Pennsylvania State University

“Penn State is at an inflection point, as is the nation and the world. I am excited to have the opportunity to be a fierce advocate for PSU research during a time of immense change. Our research mission is urgent and vital: knowledge creation, dissemination and implementation will be key determinants of human wellbeing in the rest of this century.” With a passion for pushing the boundaries of knowledge and



making a positive impact in his field, Andrew has dedicated his career to advancing scientific understanding and innovation. As a member of the President's Council, Read serves as the principal academic and administrative officer for the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research, which advances, facilitates and manages the full breadth of Penn State's research activities across the institution.

Quick Facts

- Has authored more than 250 peer-reviewed publications, 30 book chapters and four edited volumes, and has been elected to fellowships from the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Institute of Advanced Studies in Berlin, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Academy of Microbiology, the Royal Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
- Mobilized researchers from across Penn State to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Spearheaded a rapid-response internal call-for-proposals to address what was then an emerging outbreak, which led to significant investments of external funding to Penn State and to several corporate partnerships to advance technologies to market.
- Appointed Senior Vice President for Research in March 2024 and holds the rank of Evan Pugh University Professor of Biology and Entomology and was Eberly Professor of Biotechnology from 2015 to 2024.
- Directed Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences from 2019 – 2023. Relaunched the Huck Innovative and Transformative Seed Fund (HITS), which supports, at scale, bold proposals too risky for traditional funders.

Penn State's Senior Vice President for Research oversees the institutions \$1B+ research enterprise including:

- 17 Academic Colleges
- 8 Interdisciplinary Research Institutes
- Applied Research Lab
- Offices of Entrepreneurship, Commercialization, and Industrial Partnerships
- Core Research Facilities and Animal Research Labs
- Research Support Offices

“Our interdisciplinary institutes provide a unique advantage, facilitating and amplifying collaborations among researchers across colleges and campuses, and fostering excellence in graduate research as well as unparalleled opportunities for our undergraduates.”

Awards

- Member, American Academy of Arts and Sciences (elected 2018)
- Penn State President's Award for Excellence in Academic Integration (2018)
- Fellow The Royal Society (elected 2015)
- Fellow American Academy of Microbiology (elected 2014)
- Fellow of American Association for the Advancement of Science (elected 2012)
- Fellow Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute of Advanced Studies) (2006-7)
- Fellow Royal Society of Edinburgh (elected 2003)

Originally from New Zealand, he holds a PhD in evolutionary biology from Oxford University.

Learn more at <https://research.psu.edu/meet-andrew-read/>

Keynote Presentation - Industrial Investment in an AI World



Ronn Cort, President
Dunmore

Ronn Cort is President and CEO of Dunmore, a global manufacturer specializing in advanced materials for aerospace, packaging, and industrial markets. With over two decades of leadership experience in specialty manufacturing, Cort is known for driving large-scale organizational change that delivers measurable results.



Ronn serves on the Team Pennsylvania (Team PA) Board, a statewide non-profit organization, working together for all Pennsylvanians in public-private partnership to accelerate the commonwealth's long-term economic future. Team PA recently released Pennsylvania's Energy, Data Center, and Artificial Intelligence Roadmap, a bold 10-Year Roadmap Advancing Pennsylvania's Leadership in Energy, Data Centers, and AI. Ronn shared of the roadmap, *"As a manufacturer, I can tell you that while AI and technology give us the tools, what sets Pennsylvania apart are the people who will roll up their sleeves. This roadmap gets real about what it will take for this state to build and compete in an AI-powered economy. "It's about a shared vision for how businesses like mine will adopt new tech, grow responsibly, and stay rooted in our communities."* Before joining Dunmore, he led SEKISUI KYDEX through a decade of transformation - doubling revenue, leading a \$34 million multi-site campus expansion, and launching industry-first innovation spaces that generated millions in new revenue. His approach blends continuous improvement, strategic design, and people-first leadership, including programs that cut turnover by more than 30% through career development, coaching and multi-generational workplace design. Cort's work has been featured in Plastics Technology, Vistage Magazine, the Wall Street Journal, and Plastics News, where he shares insights on innovation, safety, and workforce strategy. He holds an honorary doctorate from Bloomsburg University and has degrees in strategic leadership, organizational design, and innovation from the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Cort, however, has found his most meaningful education at Gemba-the place where things happen on the manufacturing floor. At the core, Cort is a builder-of teams, systems, and ideas. He believes manufacturing can move fast, adapt boldly and stay grounded in purpose.

Presentation: Utilizing AI, Advanced Technology for Smart Growth & Industrial Development



Evan Stair, Partner and Senior Managing Director
Vista Site Selection

Evan is Vista Site Selection's senior managing director of analytics. He has spent more than a decade helping companies gather, analyze and visualize data to make smart and confident site selection, incentives and business decisions. Evan's work has included the development of several GIS map and data visualization platforms. Evan works with clients to help guide them through the site selection process.

Through the use of data and analytics, he and the Vista Site Selection team are able to narrow down potential locations and sites based on each client's and each project's individual needs. Before joining Vista Site Selection, Evan worked at several site selection and real estate companies. He also served as a real estate adjunct lecturer at the University of Texas at Dallas. Evan received his Masters is Geographic Information Science and Cartography and his B.A. from the University of Texas at Dallas.

Presentation: Utilizing AI, Advanced Technology for Smart Growth & Industrial Development



Brad Zdenek, Director of Economic Development and Student Programs
The Pennsylvania State University

In Brad's role as director of economic development and student programs, he is focused on developing new strategies and programs that increase the economic impact of Invent Penn State's state-wide LaunchBox & Innovation Network, providing opportunities for Penn State students to build entrepreneurial skills and mindsets, engage in and identify new entrepreneurial opportunities. Brad oversees Invent Penn State programs such as Penn State Startup Week powered by PNC and the Inc.U Competition.



Brad was the innovation strategist and program manager for the Penn State Nittany AI Alliance, responsible for providing direction in the formation and refinement of unit goals, partnerships and strategic planning. Previously within Penn State, he served as the director of program development and instructional design and as an innovation strategist for the Center for Online Innovation in Learning. Brad was previously an applied research and development/professional development task lead with the Regional Education Lab – Mid-Atlantic, where he directed the design and execution of professional development workshops focused on bridging scientifically valid research, policy and practice. He holds a Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Leadership from Penn State University and a bachelor's degree in secondary education from Flagler College.

Key Speaker: BusinessPA – PA Gets It Done Update: Impacts & Initiatives



Rick Siger, Secretary

Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)

Rick Siger leads the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED), driving innovation, business growth, and competitiveness across the Commonwealth. In 2024, he and Governor Josh Shapiro launched **Pennsylvania's Ten-Year Economic Development Strategy**, the state's first long-term economic plan in nearly two decades. Under his leadership, DCED has rolled out major initiatives like PA SITES, which expands Pennsylvania's inventory of shovel-ready sites, and Main Street Matters, an investment in downtowns and main streets. He has also worked to strengthen partnerships between state and local governments and the private sector, with collaborative efforts like the revitalization of downtown Pittsburgh securing nearly \$600 million in public and private investment. Since 2023, the Shapiro Administration has attracted over \$40.4 billion in private-sector investment and helped create more than 22,424 family-sustaining jobs across the state. Major milestones include Amazon's \$20 billion commitment to build high-tech AI innovation campuses across Pennsylvania and the Commonwealth's rapid growth as a national hub for artificial intelligence research and development. Previously, Rick served as Chief of Staff at Carnegie Mellon University and spent over seven years serving President Obama, holding senior roles at the White House and U.S. Department of Commerce. A Pittsburgh native, he holds a B.A. in Political Science from Columbia University.



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Moderator: Central PA Industrial Investor/Leader Panel



Aaron L. Pitts, Chief Commercial Officer

BusinessPA, Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)

Aaron joined Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development in June 2024 as its first Chief Commercial Officer (CCO). In his role as CCO, he now leads a group of 50 professionals within DCED who have been recently re-organized as BusinessPA, reflective of their focus on corporate business attraction, retention, expansion, and marketing. Prior to BusinessPA, Mr. Pitts was a

co-founder of Pontem Capital and brings more than 25 years of healthcare investment and leadership experience. Mr. Pitts' experience includes eight years as a Senior Managing Director and Chief Innovation Officer at JobsOhio, where he was a founding team member. At JobsOhio, Aaron led domestic and international business development, strategy, and industry sector teams. He also implemented a \$500M innovation strategy. Under this strategy, Mr. Pitts was Managing Partner for a \$250M Growth Capital Fund.

He led JobsOhio's \$300M Innovation District commitment with partners such as Cleveland Clinic, Nationwide Children's and Cincinnati Children's Hospitals & Research Institutes. Prior to JobsOhio, Mr. Pitts was a Senior Vice President of Strategy & Corporate Development for Cardinal Health, Inc., where he led M&A, strategy and operational roles for numerous pharmaceutical and medical-related products and services businesses. Before Cardinal Health, Mr. Pitts held management consulting roles at PwC and E&Y, leading performance improvement engagements across CPG, financial services, and manufacturing industries.

He is married to Amanda, his wife of 36 years, and together they have three grown children.

Central PA Industrial Investor/Leader Panelist



Becky Ford, Principal, Economic Development

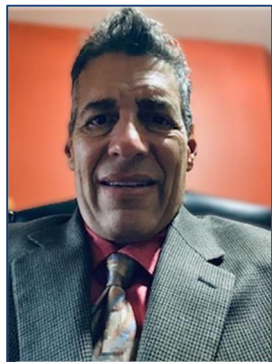
Amazon Web Services' (AWS)



Rebecca (“Becky”) Ford joined Amazon Web Services’ (AWS) Economic Development team in April 2021 to support the company’s global expansion. Ford currently leads AWS’s efforts in Mid-Atlantic greater Southeastern US and recently headed up state and local incentive negotiations on AWS’s announcements in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and central Virginia. Ford has over 20 years of experience in global business outreach and foreign direct investment. Prior to joining AWS, she served as Managing Director of Arkonik Ltd Special Vehicle Operations in Charleston. A UK-based, historic Land Rover restoration importer and distributor who utilized Ford’s experiences and guidance to establish its flagship operation in

the United States. Before joining Arkonik, Ford worked in the recruiting industry to the Palmetto State at the Charleston Regional Development Alliance, with a heavy emphasis (and success rate) in the aerospace industry. Ford has significant experience in making site location recommendations, generating strategic business plans and growth strategies, as well as advising companies on risk evaluation. Originally from northeastern Pennsylvania, Ford received her B.S. in biology and business administration from Muhlenberg College and earned MPA from University of South Carolina. She lives in Charleston, SC.

Central PA Industrial Investor/Leader Panelist



Bill Gates, SVP Operations

Hometown Food Company (Chef Boyardee)

Bill was with ConAgra Brands for over 33 years in various leadership positions including R&D, Quality, Operations, and Plant Management. He spent the last 10 years leading Grocery and Snack Platforms for the company. In June of 2025, Hometown Food Company, a Brynwood Partners Portfolio Company, Acquired the Chef Boyardee® Brand from Conagra Brands, Inc. The \$600M acquisition included the Chef Boyardee manufacturing facility in Milton, PA, and expanded Hometown Food Company’s manufacturing footprint to four U.S. regions and increased its annual revenue to over \$1.6 billion. Bill took over in June of 2025 as the Senior Vice President of Operations for Hometown Food Company based in Milton, PA. The Chef Boyardee plant in Milton, PA is one of Central Pennsylvania region's largest employers, that has been in Milton, PA (Northumberland County) since the early 1900s. The Milton complex encompasses 850,000 square feet of manufacturing and warehouse space. The cannery produces Chef Boyardee products in both cans and



microwave bowls via 8 filling lines utilizing high-speed continuous cookers, and automated batch retort systems. Bill has numerous manufacturing training and certificates and has a bachelor's degree in biology from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.

Central PA Industrial Investor/Leader Panelist



William C. Fink, Director of Agricultural Operations

Country View Family Farms (an affiliate of Clemens Food Group)

Bill Fink serves as Director of Agricultural Operations for Country View Family Farms, an affiliate of Clemens Food Group, where he supports a broad portfolio of live-animal production systems, feed milling operations, logistics infrastructure, capital projects, and environmental compliance programs across multiple states. His responsibilities span strategic planning, operational performance, supply-chain coordination, and long-term asset investment decisions that support both company growth and regional agricultural sustainability. He brings extensive experience in environmental stewardship and regulatory compliance, including nutrient management, water quality protection, permitting coordination, and implementation of best management practices that balance operational efficiency with responsible resource management. With extensive experience in integrated food and agricultural systems, Bill works at the intersection of production agriculture, industrial infrastructure, and economic development. His work frequently involves modernization of facilities, deployment of automation and data systems, risk-reduction investments, and collaboration with public-sector partners to align infrastructure and regulatory realities with private-sector capital planning. Bill is actively engaged in regional and state-level agricultural, environmental and economic initiatives, contributing practical industry perspectives on workforce development, environmental stewardship, and responsible industrial growth. He is known for a pragmatic, systems-oriented leadership style that emphasizes operational predictability, long-term asset stewardship, and partnerships that enable sustainable investment in both rural and industrial communities.



Central PA Industrial Investor/Leader Panelist



Matt Weigle, Vice President of IT & Automation

SEKISUI KYDEX

Matt Weigle serves as the Vice President of IT & Automation at SEKISUI KYDEX in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, where he leads the company's IT/OT strategy and drives the vision for advanced manufacturing. In this role, he focuses on aligning technology, process innovation, and organizational capability to strengthen operational performance and competitive advantage. With a career spanning three decades, Matt has held technical and leadership positions across both Fortune Global 100 manufacturing companies and emerging private technology firms. His work is defined by a passion for identifying innovative opportunities that elevate market position, enhance profitability, and deepen employee engagement. Matt holds a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Science and a Master's in Supply Chain Management from Penn State, as well as an MBA with a concentration in Strategic Planning from the Edinburgh Business School at Heriot-Watt University. He also regularly serves on advisory boards and panels, including at the Pennsylvania College of Technology and Commonwealth University, and served previously on the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority Board.



Central PA Industrial Investor/Leader Panelist



Donald Heaney, President and CEO
Advanced Powder Products, Inc. (APP)



Donald F. Heaney is the president and CEO of Advanced Powder Products, Inc. Don recently received and was recognized with Penn State College of Engineering's Outstanding Engineering Alumni (OEA) Award, the highest honor bestowed by the College of Engineering that recognizes graduates who have reached exceptional levels of professional achievement. Don, a PhD metallurgist teaching at Penn State, helped pioneer and commercialize a new process called Metal Injection Molding or also known as MIM. Don Heaney literally wrote the Handbook of Metal Injection Molding and is considered a world resource for technical information on powder metallurgy. Don has successfully applied his knowledge in building Advanced Powder Products (APP) located in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania. APP is nationally recognized as the fastest growing MIM company in America – right here in the heart of Pennsylvania's Iron Man country. As the company's founder and technical executive specializing in metal powder processing, Heaney builds and leads teams of diverse people to accomplish business and technical objectives. Prior to his current role, Heaney served as an associate professor at Penn State, where he directed laboratory and contract research for the Center for Innovative Sintered Products. Earlier in his career, Heaney worked as a principal engineer for Zimmer Biomet and senior process development engineer for 3M. He is a member of the American Society of Materials (ASM), formerly known as the American Society for Metals, and the Metal Powder Industries Federation and has served on the Penn State Department of Engineering Science and Mechanics Industrial and Professional Advisory Council since 2023. Heaney has been honored with several awards including the 2012 Moshannon Valley Economic Development Partnership Entrepreneur of the Year Award and an ASM Fellow in 2021. He was named as the Ben Franklin Big Business Plan Contest Winner in 2000, and his company has been included on the 2016-23 editions of Inc. 5000's fastest growing company list. A Schreyer Honors College alumnus, Heaney holds a bachelor of science and master of science in engineering science, and a doctoral degree in material science and engineering, all from Penn State. He is a registered professional engineer in Pennsylvania and resides in Port Matilda, Pennsylvania.

Central PA Industrial Investor/Leader Panelist



Buddy Johns, President
ModCorr

Buddy recently led the \$15M+ investment for their new location, a long-term lease of a 252,282SF building in Great Stream Commons, Allenwood, PA that will create 100 new jobs. Buddy is the President of ModCorr and has a demonstrated history of working in the construction industry. His skills include Land Development, Negotiation, Operations Management, Sales, and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Strong operations professional with a bachelor's degree focused in BSBA from Robert Morris University.

Closing Remarks & Next Steps



Nick Felice, President/CEO & Chair

Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation (MCIDC) & Focus Central PA

Born and raised in Erie County, Nick studied at Mercyhurst and Frostburg State universities. With 30-years of community and economic development experience, he has worked in six Pennsylvania communities including Somerset, Meadville, Huntingdon, Latrobe and Johnstown, before settling in Lewistown. He has been the lead administrator in seven organizations, supervising varying numbers of staff and volunteers. Nick has overseen improvements and marketing of twelve development sites, and was involved in the successful effort to bring North American Hoganas to the Johnstown region. In July of 2017, he took over as President/CEO of MCIDC. Recent professional and community service has included the Mifflin County Ad-Hoc Grant Review Committee, Juniata Valley River Valley Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Lewistown Inc. advisory committees. He also serves on the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association Conference Committee and is the current Chair of Focus Central PA. Felice said “MCIDC continues to work with Mifflin County’s

companies, supporting expansion and retention projects, while continuing our strong relationship working through Focus’s network for development opportunities.” He and his wife Gina have two sons, Mac and Alex.

