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York County, PA Sports 4 of the State's top Businesswomen

CHARLES SCHILLINGER *The York Dispatch*
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Four women from York County ranked among the top 50 businesswomen in Pennsylvania in a recently announced list.

The women were chosen by an independent panel of judges for establishing themselves as leaders in their respective fields and their contributions to local communities and the state.

The local award recipients are: Sharon A. Dorn, president of Clear Creek Consulting LLC; Susan Heinle, president and owner of Visiting Angels; Jennifer Geesey, president of Central Penn Benefits Inc.; and Ann Stacey, of Buchart Horn Inc. / BASCO Associates.

Sharon A. Dorn, 55-year-old entrepreneur, admitted her surprise when she learned that she had made the top 50 list. Her husband nominated her.

Dorn has worked in the nonprofit industry for more than 30 years, starting at Johns Hopkins University. She always dreamed of having her own business.

And now she does.

"Six years ago, I left the position I was in and just decided, you know what, I'm just gonna do it," said the East Hopewell Township woman. "And now I run my own firm out of my home."

Clear Creek Consulting LLC is a consulting organization for nonprofit groups such as DreamWrights Youth & Family Theatre in York City. It helps with planning, fundraising, finding potential board members and executive directors, and creating capital campaigns.

Dorn thinks she made the list because she not only counsels nonprofits but also gets involved with them. She also is familiar with the area, as she grew up in Baltimore and has lived in York County for 21 years.



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"I have a personal relationship with clients, and the fact that I really do try to exceed their expectations, whatever they are, helps, I think," she said.

Susan Heinle's life changed dramatically when her father, Alfred Ropp, became ill several years ago.

A registered nurse with a 20-year background in home care for the elderly, Heinle noticed her mother, Doris, needed help taking care of him when he was sick. But there was a lack of services able to help her parents in the area.

"I was just feeling increasingly in need of a career change. I had lost the balance of life between family and work," the 46-year-old Heinle said. "And then my father took ill."

Her father passed away in September 2001. Afterward, she regrouped and, with her husband, Dennis Heinle, took a "leap of faith" in opening Visiting Angels, she said.

The franchise is a non-medical home-care company that helps older adults with daily living, from grocery shopping and doing laundry to dressing and bathing. The idea is to help older adults stay in their homes as long as they can do so safely, Heinle said.

"It turned out to be a wonderful decision, and we're very happy," she said. "We started out with nothing, and now we have 200 customers and two offices."

One office is on South Queen Street in York Township. The other is in Hanover.

Heinle was born and raised in the county and attended York College. Her roots and commitment to the community -- she is involved with the county's Area Agency on Aging -- helped her chances in ranking in the top 50 women in business, she said.

"It's quite an honor and a little bit of a shock," she said.

The apple didn't fall far from the tree with Jennifer Geesey, another York County entrepreneur who made list.

Until about three years ago, the York native had been working behind the scenes at a large health insurance company, weeding through statistics and developing insurance rates.

Then, the now 32-year-old decided it was time for a change.

"I decided I wasn't getting very far where I was, so I started looking around," Geesey said. "Then I started to think, man, I can do this for myself and guide companies the way I want to."

So she started Central Penn Benefits Inc., now on North Beaver Street in downtown York. The company helps small- to medium-sized businesses with health insurance programs and insurance costs while maintaining quality benefits, she said.

By doing so, she followed the path of her parents, who own their own businesses in York County: Jim Plessinger owns Suburban Bowlerama and Barb Plessinger owns Kids Clothes, both located on South Queen Street.

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Geesey said she was surprised to be named to the top 50 list. She cites her involvement on several community boards, including Junior Achievement and Olivia's House.

"That's one of the reasons I left the last job. I couldn't get involved in the community. Now that I am, it's been really, really great," Geesey said.

If there is a brain drain in Pennsylvania -- the loss of educated citizens to other parts of the country -- Ann Stacey thinks she must be the antithesis of it.

And the Michigan native who made Pennsylvania her home credits that for her place among the state's top 50 women in business.

The 38-year-old said she had no real intentions of remaining in Pennsylvania after studying public administration at Penn State University. But she fell in love with working with local governments -- and you can't get more of that anywhere but in Pennsylvania, she said.

After working 12 years with engineers and architects to revitalize downtown communities and build new municipal buildings, college buildings and school buildings, she decided to expand her role.

Now, at the world headquarters in York City for Bucharthorn Inc. / BASCO Assoc., she is working for them. The company is a full-service architectural, planning and engineering firm with 21 offices across the nation and two offices in Germany.

As client services director, it's Stacey's job to attract new clients for architectural, mechanical and electrical services. She worked with the company for three years but previously also worked with several communities in western Pennsylvania.

"It's very rewarding to see communities with decades of economic challenges creating economic catalysts for the future," she said.

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