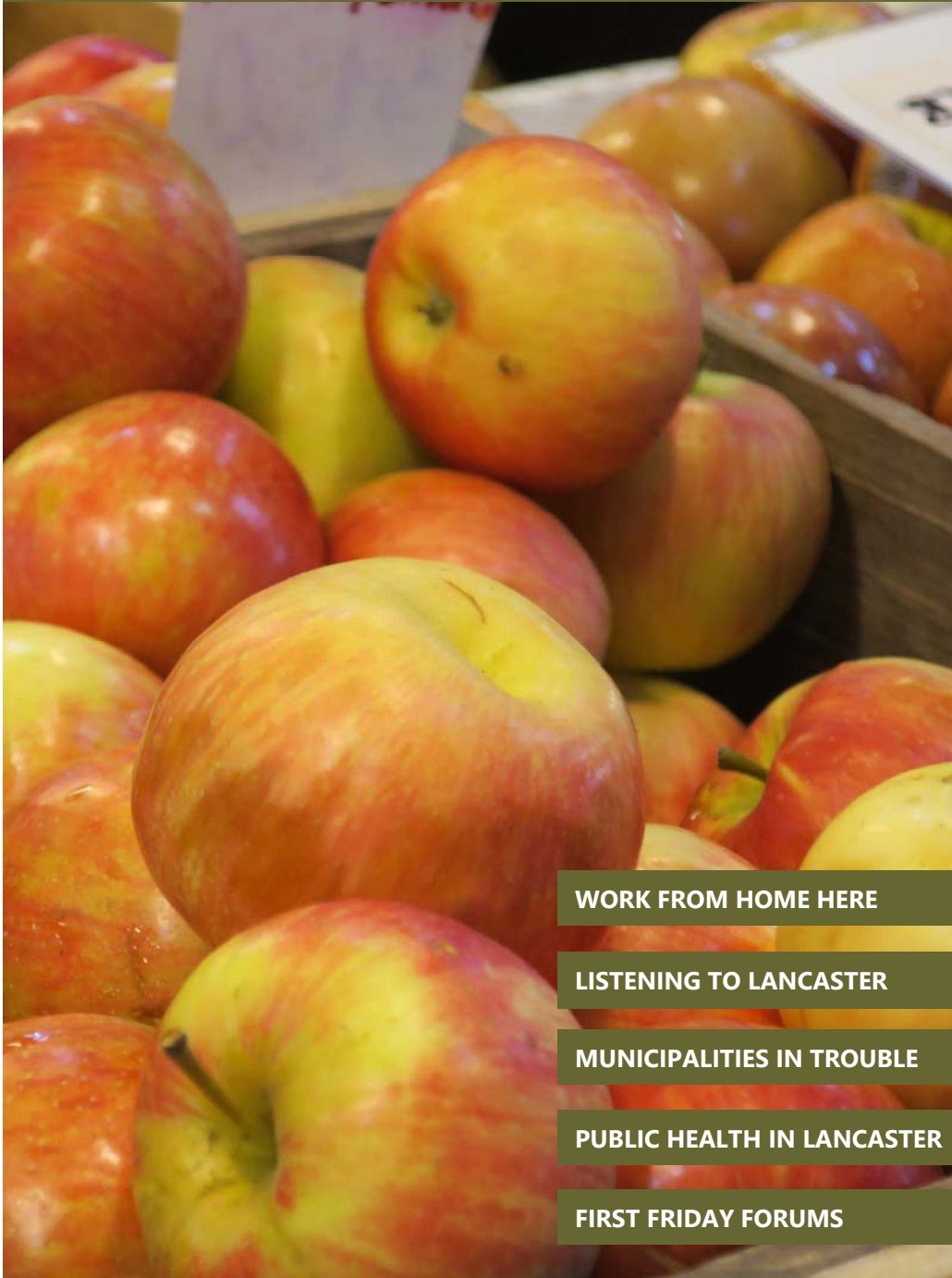


Fall 2020

Hourglass Quarterly



WORK FROM HOME HERE

LISTENING TO LANCASTER

MUNICIPALITIES IN TROUBLE

PUBLIC HEALTH IN LANCASTER

FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

Thank you to the sponsor of this edition of the Hourglass Quarterly:



(717) 397-8282
777 East Ross Street
Lancaster, PA 17602

Wickersham Construction and
Engineering, Inc. is a Proud
Sponsor of the Hourglass

If you are interested in sponsoring this publication,
please contact the Hourglass at
(717) 295-0755 or at Hourglass@HourglassLancaster.org

PUBLIC HEALTH IN LANCASTER

Partnership for Public Health Makes Case



*Article written
by Susan
Baldrige,
Director of the
Partnership for
Public Health.*

Public health is an effort to keep a community as safe and healthy as possible. This pandemic highlights the need for a public health department in Lancaster County.

Both the health of our population and even our economic survival has been significantly challenged during the COVID-19 crisis. The virus has highlighted how uniquely susceptible this county is to diseases among our retirement homes, Plain Sect families and our underserved communities. It has hit our business community and our public and private schools and threatened one of our most valuable assets – tourism. This crisis made it clear that we need health emergency preparedness with plans and supplies in place before a crisis. We also need clear and concise messaging to the public based on our Lancaster County needs. Perhaps most importantly, because we don't have our own county health department, we have no access to our

own health data. As one local physician put it recently, "the effort during the COVID-19 crisis, without a health department, has been like a pilot flying blind into a snowstorm." Our county is too large, too unique and too valuable to chance being underprepared for another wave of COVID-19, the next pandemic or any other unknowable crisis we may face in the future.

Bringing a county health department to our community does not add additional government, in fact it serves to bring health decisions down to local control and tailor them to fit our needs, rather than relying on one-size-fits-all decrees from the state Department of Health. That's what 10 other municipalities have already done in Pennsylvania and two more are looking to do so as well. When that happens, Lancaster, with its population of more than half a million people will be the largest county in Pennsylvania NOT to have its own health department, and one of the largest in the U.S.





After conversations with community leaders, the Partnership for Public Health has offered a plan for a local health department that is headed by a health strategist, someone who understands public health and can advise leaders on how to confront threats to our health and well-being. It's not enough to get data, we have to know how to use it wisely.



PARTNERSHIP FOR
PUBLIC HEALTH

But a health department is about prevention of disease and injury, as much as it is about responding to a crisis. A healthy and productive workforce is vital to our future economy. A public health authority can help employers ensure that. Also, consider the fact that we have no single entity in our county looking at county-wide health trends like West Nile Virus, Lyme Disease, maternal death, malnutrition, obesity, asthma and a host of other communicable and environmental factors that affect our health. For instance, there may be several children in a particular geographic area who are being poisoned by lead, an irreversible condition. A health strategist would be able to see where that poisoning is taking

place and advise that the soil, water supply and household paint should be examined to keep other children from the same fate. Without a community health authority, we have to wait for the state to put out a report years after the contamination with no information about where it happened.

Those who are a fan of efficient government should take note that millions of dollars in state and federal money, a percentage paid by Lancaster County residents, goes to communities with local public health authorities. And many grants cannot be accessed here by non-profit organizations because they require the presence of a local health department.

There are many reasons that a local health department should be important to our residents. A Lancaster County public health presence just makes sense for the needs we have today and to ensure our health and safety into tomorrow.

The Hourglass held a First Friday Forum in November, "Public Health in Lancaster County". Susan Baldrige, Dr. Jeff Martin, and Dr. Brian Barnhart participated in a panel discussion. You can find a video of the conversation on the Hourglass website or on our YouTube channel. 