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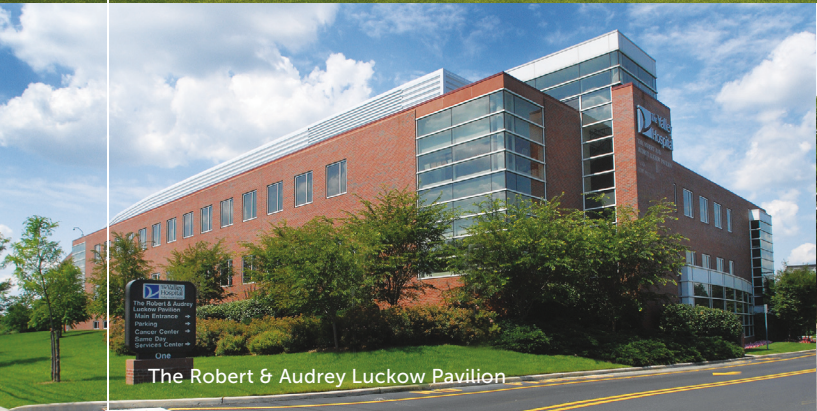
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Cover Photo: Russ DeSantis Photography and Video

Cover Photo: Siblings Chris, Julie and Andrew Mulvihill run the sprawling Crystal Springs Resorts in the picturesque Kittatinny Mountains of Sussex County.

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# CIANJ Heads Overseas For a Hungarian Experience

By Anthony Russo  
President, CIANJ

In April, CIANJ led a delegation of members, which included a State Senator, to Hungary to explore business opportunities and to learn more about the people of Hungary and its rich history and culture. The trip was a first

of its kind for CIANJ. Eighteen members, representing the financial, retail, logistics, legal, technology, contracting, and healthcare industries joined the delegation. Why Hungary? Because in 2019, CIANJ signed a partnership with the American Hungarian Chamber of Commerce to explore ways in which our businesses can work together. The partnership grew out of an earlier trip to Budapest in 2018, when CIANJ joined a delegation from New Jersey City University (NJCU)'s Connecting Bridges and Borders program led by Professor David Weiss. On this trip, we were fortunate to have been joined by two CIANJ Board members of Hungarian descent. Paige Dworak, CEO of Carewell Health, and Al Komjathy, President of Komjathy and Kean got to explore and see a part of their heritage.

Similar to the trip in 2018, it was important to focus not only on the business



Members of the CIANJ delegation include, left to right, Martin Zsarnoczky, president of the American Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, Kathy Agudo, CIANJ vice president, CIANJ President Anthony Russo, New Jersey State Sen. Gordon Johnson, Levente Magyar, deputy minister, and Al Komjathy, a CIANJ board member.

opportunities, but also on the culture and history of Hungary because after all, business is best conducted with people you know and understand. The week began with a briefing from officials from the US embassy and included a

cultural tour of Budapest, a visit to Parliament, a networking cruise on the Danube, meetings with representatives from the Hungarian investment and economic agencies, government officials and local business owners. The delegation also headed to Hungary's second largest city, Debrecen, located in the eastern part of the country not far from the Ukrainian border where we viewed the construction of a BMW plant where electric vehicles will be manufactured along with other industrial enterprises. And did you know there is a connection with Debrecen and New Jersey? New Brunswick and Debrecen have been twin cities since 1990.

In looking back at the takeaways from the trip, not only did we meet with so many potential businesses partners looking to establish operations in New Jersey but also the members of the delegation became fast friends after spending five days together in a country with so much to offer. In fact, many of them have already expressed an interest in joining the next CIANJ overseas delegation. We want to thank our hosts and partners for assisting in such a great trip including the Consulate General of Hungary New York, the American Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, the Budapest Chamber of Commerce, Xanga and all our members who attended. 🇺🇸



This magnificent sculpture at the Dohány Street Synagogue – the largest in Europe – was among the sites the delegation toured.





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KEEP GETTING BETTER



# Running Crystal Springs Resort is a Mulvihill Family Affair

By Diane C. Walsh  
Editor, COMMERCE

**S**iblings Julie, Andrew and Chris Mulvihill have a lot in common – like their love of the outdoors, their entrepreneurial zeal and strong work ethics. But none comes close to the unique bond they share as owners and operators of Crystal Springs Resort.

Their sprawling resort sits atop more than 4,000 acres in the picturesque Kittatinny Mountains of Sussex County. Brother Chris, who handles all the marketing, isn't boasting when he describes it as the "pre-eminent golf, spa and culinary resort of the Northeast."

The centerpieces are the jaw-dropping beauty of Grand Cascades Lodge, with its organic design elements and wood infusion, and the energetic and inviting appeal of Minerals Hotel.

Half a million people come to enjoy the amenities every year. But if you asked, they would be hard-pressed to choose their favorite. Would it be the Garden State's No. 1 public golf course, Ballyowen, or the 4-star Restaurant Latour with its award-winning 45,000-bottle wine cellar that has been showcased as a perennial winner of *Wine Spectator's* Grand Award? Or maybe they are captivated by the tropical biosphere pool complex.

Forty years of planning, growing, and adapting have gone into Crystal Springs and each sibling has a distinct role. Andrew is the builder. Chris fills it and Julie runs it.

Julie said, "We cut our teeth" on Action Park, the wildly popular water park started by their late father, Gene, in the 1970s. The siblings owe their entrepreneurial spirit to him. He also instilled a desire to entertain that comes through today in one-of-kind experiences at Crystal Springs, such as team building with goat yoga classes.

During high school and college, the Mulvihill kids worked at Action Park. "We hosted 20,000 people a day there," Julie vividly recalled, adding she was managing 150 lifeguards. The experience taught her the importance of good operational systems and set her on a career path. The eye for detail and devotion to efficiency she honed as a teenager are now Crystal Springs' assets.

Eventually Action Park was sold. But the Mulvihills weren't done. They acquired Crystal Springs when its original owner went bankrupt. In the first phase of development, Andrew built 1,500 condominium units and the first golf course for the resort.

Over the years, Andrew has built hundreds of single-family homes and townhouses on the property, some are even nestled into the mountain with ski in, ski out access. He said the resort

community developed within Crystal Springs is very special because it gives the homeowners access to world-class amenities such as the 10 dining venues and six championship caliber golf courses. The property owners can take comfort in knowing the Mulvihills have a stake in the community's success. "There's really a great dynamic at work here. We really help each other," Andrew said.

The family prides itself on its over-the-top style. For instance, while building Grand Cascades Lodge they opted for a "biosphere" instead of an ordinary pool. The indoor glass structure creates a tropical oasis that can be enjoyed year-round. Naturally, it's a boon in the wintertime. But even in warm weather, Julie said, guests enjoy it because the roof and sides open completely.

For the grand ballroom design, Andrew incorporated huge glass walls to achieve panoramic views. "You can actually see High Point Monument, and the sunsets are just mind-blowing," Julie said. As CEO, Julie enjoys working with her brothers, especially with Andrew on the building designs. "We really speak the same language," she said. "When you've work with someone for more than 30 years, it's like a good marriage. It's not without its arguments, but we know how to get things done."

*Continued On Page 9*



Photo: Crystal Springs Resort



Photo: Crystal Springs Resort

Enjoy gourmet outdoor dining with beautiful vistas. Menu items feature fresh, locally grown ingredients.



*Continued From Page 8*

Crystal Springs even injects its own brand of pizzazz into the menus. Julie defied the naysayers – some within her own family – by creating a menu from ingredients foraged on the grounds and the surrounding woodlands. This extraordinary menu evolved from the Mulvihills’ joy in gardening. It’s a hobby they inherited from their dad, who was always on a quest to grow the best Jersey tomato. Julie still tends the Crystal Spring gardens and delights when guests fawn over her “sensitive plant,” a Mimosa whose leaves fold inward or droop when touched.

Chris proudly notes his sister’s flair led them to create a “chef’s garden,” long before the farm-to-table approach became a restaurant trend. But Julie was not satisfied with a few home-grown herbs and vegetables. When she hired a new chef, Julie seized on the opportunity to incorporate the foraged plants, roots and berries into a unique menu. Food critics were bowled over by the dishes and their reviews add to Crystal Springs’ stellar reputation.

The Mulvihills continually prove they are savvy and nimble operators. Every year, 150,000 rounds of golf are played on the six champion-caliber golf courses designed by links luminaries, Robert von Hagge, Robert Trent Jones, and Roger Rulewich. More than 250 couples celebrate their weddings annually in the breath-taking venues within the resort. And the sibling operators are forever pushing each other to explore new ventures and concepts.

Their love and appreciation for the outdoors made them environmental stewards from the beginning. With today’s proliferation of eco-conscious travelers, the siblings have a niche because of the resort’s approach to sustainability and environmental awareness.

They can boast the largest resort-based solar farm in the Northeast. It comprises 19,000 solar panels on 25 acres, generating 3.5 megawatts annually. This electric output is greater than the

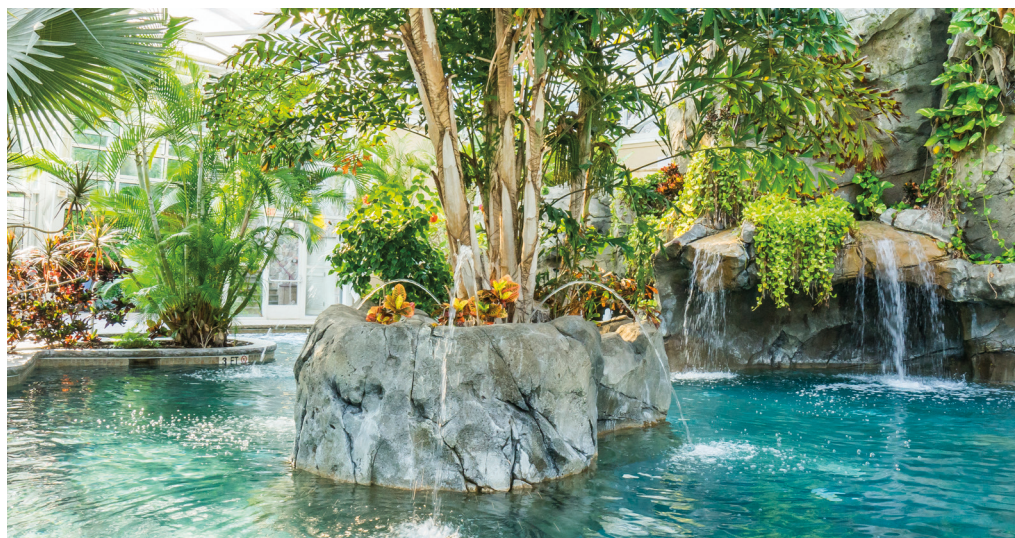


Photo: Crystal Springs Resort

Indoor biosphere with pool and garden

combined power consumption of the resort’s two hotels, Chris said.

Yet, he said “that isn’t the greenest thing about us.” In Chris’ estimation, Crystal Springs location is its biggest environmental plus. “Come here instead of burning jet fuel on a flight to Las Vegas for a corporate retreat,” he stated.

The specially curated array of team building programs have been in great demand since the pandemic. Corporations endorse these activities plus the sustainability efforts and often bring their staff to reconnect at Crystal Springs.

Solar farm education, beehive box building, and food preservation workshops are all in demand. One of the most popular offerings is “goat yoga” wherein guests take part in an interactive one-hour yoga class, followed by a mix and mingle with the friendly local animals. Chris said the calming effect of being with the animals in the natural setting is amazing.

The remote and hybrid work scenarios during the pandemic enhanced the team building initiatives, allowing the resort to pivot and capture a new revenue stream. Additionally, Crystal Springs’ ability to adapt and concentrate on new markets enabled it to emerge stronger from the pandemic.

Many in the hospitality industry were not so lucky. “It was a blood bath,” Julie said, who believes the resort not only survived but also thrived because it is a stable family business with long-tenured managers working throughout the operation. “When you have that kind of foundational rock of people working with you, you get through something like this,” she said.

Julie, Andy and Chris are committed to the Crystal Springs family business and will continue to focus on their clientele’s needs and enhancing the customer experience. They are committed to addressing whatever may lie ahead in the ever-evolving landscape of hospitality. 🍷



Photo: Crystal Springs Resort

Panoramic photo of resort exterior.



# Defining a Dune: A Case Study in

By Agnes Antonian  
and  
Christina Sartorio Ku,  
Connell Foley

**W**atching helplessly as all of your neighbors expand their homes while locked in a six-year struggle to obtain routine permits for a small expansion project – this is the reality for two homeowners in the Borough of Beach Haven, New Jersey. Michael and Maria O'Hara originally applied for a Coastal General Permit 5 in February of 2017, seeking approval for the reconstruction and expansion of their oceanfront, single-family home. The application sought to allow expansion in line with other neighboring properties, which had all previously received permit approvals in the past few years to expand their homes and decks towards the water. Given that their application request was similar, the O'Haras believed that they would be able to begin construction soon.

However, without providing any supporting documentation or explanation, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) notified the O'Hara's engineer in a March 2017 email that the dune was located further west (inland) than had been found for all of their neighbors. The DEP issued a permit, which did not allow any expansion of the house from its current footprint, and set the home back as compared to the adjacent properties.

The O'Haras, who were not aware of these changes, were surprised and extremely disappointed when they first learned about this significant change, months after the Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA) permit had been approved. Since the appeal window had lapsed, the O'Haras had to file a second permit application on May 15, 2020, for the same proposed footprint. The DEP again denied this application on August 12, 2020. The O'Haras were forced to appeal and are currently in litigation.

The DEP's denial of the 2020 permit application was based on the determination that, again, the dune extends further west than the adjacent properties. However, this determination appears inconsistent with the NJDEP's dune regulations. Specifically, N.J.A.C.



Maria and Michael O'Hara's house in Beach Haven is the third from the left.



# Current Coastal Permitting Battles



7:7-6.5(d)1ii notes that a primary frontal dune means a “continuous or nearly continuous mound or ridge of sand with relatively steep waterward and landward slopes immediately landward of and adjacent to the beach.” The Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court has interpreted “relatively steep” to mean that the “waterward and landward slopes... must abruptly incline and decline respectively compared with the rest of the subject property or with the other properties in the area immediately adjacent to the subject property. *Siegel v. NJDEP*, 395 N.J. Super. 604, 619-20 (App. Div. 2007).

Here, consultants and engineers for the O’Hara project have confirmed that the landward slope of the primary oceanfront dune, characterized by the requisite “relatively steep slope,” is east of the dwelling, and does not include the area beneath the deck which is flat. Thus, judicial precedent and DEP’s regulations confirm that the subject dune ends waterward of the proposed development.

The DEP’s denial also appears to be contrary and inconsistent with its prior findings relating to another property to the south, where the NJDEP issued a jurisdictional determination allowing construction in the same area the O’Haras seek to renovate their house. Other dwellings in the area are all similarly built to, or even beyond, the same building line to which the O’Haras seek to expand. Thus, DEP’s ruling in this matter appears inconsistent with prior permit approvals at properties near the O’Haras and the current regulations and judicial precedent.

This case shows that the process to obtain land use permits, including Coastal Zone Development Permits such as that sought by the O’Haras, has been increasingly unpredictable and difficult to navigate over the past decade, especially in light of the state’s changing policies and regulations to address emerging issues such as climate change. The complex and unique nature of DEP’s permitting process only highlights the importance of retaining experienced environmental consultants and attorneys as early in the process as possible to help minimize the risk of potential hurdles and significant, years-long delays. 📌



# Selective Insurance Powers Up by Adding Giant Solar Farm

By Diane C. Walsh  
Editor, COMMERCE

**S**elective Insurance, a leading business, home and auto carrier, showed its commitment to sustainability and clean energy recently, in completing a huge 3.8 megawatt solar installation at its Branchville headquarters.

The facility was unveiled at the “Power Up NJ” event, where Mark Wilcox, the company’s executive vice president and chief financial officer explained Selective’s philosophy in constructing the solar field and commitment to a clean energy future.

“As a property and casualty insurer, we understand climate change science and the impact increased weather-related loss frequency and severity have on our individual and business customers,” he said. “To advance a clean energy future and reduce carbon-based power demand, we proudly unveil the latest solar installation at our Branchville, NJ corporate headquarters. This installation allows us to produce up to approximately five million kWh of electricity annually that we sell to others.”

In a statement released by the company, Selective officials also said they believe climate change contributes to the increasing unpredictability of natural catastrophes, such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, which are among the most serious and severe risks facing our policyholders, communities and businesses. “We believe it is our corporate responsibility to help mitigate climate change impacts for all our stakeholders,” the statement read.

Selective’s commitment to renewable energy began in 2019 when it built a ground-mount solar photovoltaic facility on 9 acres located on the company’s Branchville property. It consisted of 7,470 LG 400-Watt solar panels. This initial



Aerial view of Selective Insurance solar farm

facility generates 4 million kWh of electricity annually that is sold through New Jersey’s Solar Renewable Energy Certificate Program.

The second phase was constructed as a canopy over the company’s parking garage and is expected to produce 1 million kWh of electricity each year. It will be sold through the state’s Transition Renewable Energy Certificate Program.

At the event, Selective unveiled a commemorative solar panel for attendees involved with the project to sign. Visitors were also able to inspect the four new U.S.-manufactured charging stations with dual ports that Selective installed at its headquarters. Employees can now charge their electric vehicles while at work.

Sol Systems, LLC was the contractor for the ground mount project. Infinity Energy, LLC and Star-Lo Electric, Inc. also worked on the project. For the canopy installation, Selective contracted

Sol CES Projects, LLC and the sub-contractors included: Core Development Group, LLC and Star-Lo Electric Inc.

Selective Insurance Group, Inc. (Nasdaq: SIGI) is a holding company for 10 property and casualty insurance companies rated “A+” (Superior) by AM Best. Through independent agents, the insurance companies offer standard and specialty insurance for commercial and personal risks and flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program’s Write Your Own Program. Selective’s unique position as both a leading insurance group and an employer of choice is recognized in a wide variety of awards and honors, including listing in Forbes Best Midsize Employers in 2023 and certification as a Great Place to Work® in 2023 for the fourth consecutive year. For more information about Selective, visit [www.Selective.com](http://www.Selective.com). 📌



Mark A. Wilcox of Select Insurance announces their solar initiative while (L-R): Vincent Senia and Tracy Morato sign their solar panels.







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# Accounting Firms Calculate How to Overcome Talent Shortages

Compiled by Diane C. Walsh  
Editor, COMMERCE

**T**here's a talent shortage affecting every industry across the spectrum. And accounting is one of the hardest hit. Ralph Albert Thomas, the outgoing executive director of the New Jersey Society of CPAs, identified it as the profession's biggest challenge. In his retirement, Thomas is exploring a new role as "executive in residence" at area colleges and universities to encourage students – especially ones of color – to choose careers as certified public accountants. His remarks lead *COMMERCE* Magazine to pose a question to managing partners at leading accounting firms, asking them to discuss how the shortage is affecting their practices and what steps they are taking to combat it.



**Citrin Cooperman**  
Alex Serrano  
NJ Managing Partner

The unemployment of accountants is significantly lower than the national unemployment rate, which is why Citrin Cooperman is addressing the labor shortage at the root level.

In addition to setting an example by enriching the professional experience of our staff through

*Accounting+ provides students with access to resources and continued support along their journeys, from initial discovery about how a career in accounting can match their own passions and goals, to ultimately choosing accounting as a major of study in college.*

numerous benefits programs that focus on education and collaborative and flexible work environments, we ensure that our recruitment

efforts reflect the diverse communities we serve. Citrin Cooperman is deeply invested in moving the needle on diversity recruitment for the accounting profession, through meaningful and actionable commitments to organizations focused on DEI.

We have partnered with Accounting+, a national awareness campaign created in collaboration with the Center for Audit Quality and leading accounting firms to help non-majority high school and college students discover the vast opportunities in the accounting field. Accounting+ provides students with access to resources and continued support along their journeys, from initial discovery about how a career in accounting can match their own passions and goals, to ultimately choosing accounting as a major of study in college. Our people also participate in regional career development opportunities with organizations like Think Big for Kids, and local chapters of CPA associations, geared to the non-majority population. Our diverse college alumni professionals work with their alma maters to organize career days intended to relay the benefits of a career in accounting for college students at every level. Our aim is to fundamentally change the unemployment

*Continued On Page 15*



Accounting firms are finding that implementing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies help to attract new employees



# Accounting

*Continued From Page 14*

ment landscape by showing tomorrow's leaders what possibilities a career in accounting holds.



**CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP)**  
Alan Sobel  
Managing Principal  
New Jersey Offices

There are many root causes to the shortage of accountants, including the rigors of becoming a certified public accountant (CPA) i.e., completing 150 credit hours of college and passing the four-part CPA exam. At CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP), we are centered on a multi-tiered approach to mitigate the shortage, built around our CLA Promise, which is “to know you and to help you.”

At the heart of our efforts in attracting and keeping strong talent is a focus on creating inspired careers for our CLA family members. It begins with getting into our local communities and exposing future talent to the meaningful and rewarding careers in accounting through awareness days, internships, and other hands-on collaboration with educators and students on the multi-faceted paths that can be taken in accounting. Once someone joins CLA, the focus turns to working together to develop the inspired career of their choice. These could be centered around service lines, industry, and or geography.

In addition, CLA is adopting new advancing technologies – including artificial intelligence – to minimize manual work steps better suited for machines and to find, match, and uti-

lize capacity across the full complement of our staffing resources outside of our profession's work compression periods.

We strive to make CLA a place where people can achieve the full potential of their chosen path and support them with deep resources and wellness programs that keep our workforce highly motivated, leading to a strategic advantage in combatting reduced numbers of professionals in the field of accounting.



**Goldstein Lieberman & Company LLC**  
Phillip Goldstein  
Managing Member

It's my pleasure to address the timely issue of attracting and retaining professional team members. Why? Because we have been able to recruit young people and have them stay with us often for a lifetime.

We know the problems facing our profession are staggering – some 350,000 accountants have left the profession last year alone. We understand they're not being replaced in anywhere near those numbers and we agree that the often-discussed five-year college track for CPAs isn't helping and this needs to be changed.

But we're problem solvers. We believe the exodus and replacement shortage plaguing our profession is primarily due to this – most people don't want to stay locked up at-home spewing out numbers like an accounting robot. Yet, that's what many firms have to offer their professionals today. They were locked up during Covid and found it expedient not to reopen.

But how can young professionals looking for opportunity knock on doors that no longer exist? At Goldstein Lieberman, we don't look for job seekers who want to stay at home... we look for young people eager for a real career. We offer our team members a place where they can show up, work with their contemporaries, be mentored by proven leaders, meet with clients, network with other professionals like lawyers and bankers and even socialize after work at a brick and mortar nearby restaurant – not on Facetime or through Facebook but face to face. In short, we offer the kind of career that attracted so many of us a few decades ago. We look for people who don't just want to get a job – we seek people who want to get a life – It may sound retro but guess what? It's working!



**Traphagen CPAs & Wealth Advisors**  
Robert Traphagen, CPA, CGMA  
Managing Partner

With a demand for services at an all – time high, accounting firms are being impacted by a shortage of talent. According to a 2021 Bloomberg Analysis there is a “17% decline in employed accountants and auditors from a 2019 peak”. During these challenging times, it is imperative to attract, develop and retain younger generations. At Traphagen CPAs & Wealth Advisors, we are dealing with the talent shortage by focusing on our core values of: Vision, Care and Trust. Our values have helped us foster a team culture

*Continued On Page 16*



Working with local communities and exposing future talent to the meaningful and rewarding careers in accounting has proven to be a successful way to attract new students to the profession.



Implementing new technologies keeps accountants and interns engaged by reducing the need to do mundane, repetitive tasks.



# Accounting

Continued From Page 15

where our associates have a sense of purpose and belonging. We do this through:

- Our College Ambassador Program, which has cultivated a presence at local colleges and universities; we actively participate in outreach programs; with Gen Z associates now teaching as adjunct professors.
- Our partnership with the New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants (NJCPA), which has provided us with the opportunity to work with High School educators to raise awareness about the CPA profession.
- Our commitment to emerging technologies – to enhance accounting practices and attract Next Gen associates.
- Our culture and beliefs aligned with our associate's values, with an emphasis on a healthy work environment and flexibility.
- The key is to build trust and provide clear career opportunities for our associates. We encourage personal development and support education beyond credentials allowing them to grow professionally and personally.

Firm leaders must understand the new generation of professionals and recognize their expectations and potential impact, which may well be a key ingredient in the success and sustainability of their firm! 🍀



Photo: Getty Images/stockphoto/PeopleImages

Understanding the ideals, goals and expectations is important in hiring and retaining young employees. They are very engaged in social issues and DEI.

## LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

# First Impressions Matter



By Steve Aduato, PhD  
Freelance Contributor

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Those words are truer today than ever before. Consider some of the keys to making a positive first impression.

- **Camera on.** If you are communicating in a virtual setting, it is nearly impossible to make a good first impression if the other person cannot see you. If your camera is off, the message being received by your audience is that you aren't confident enough in you or your message to be seen.
- **Stand tall.** Your posture says a lot about your overall energy, confidence, and intention. If you are slumped over in your chair, you are sending the non-verbal message that you are tired,

disinterested, or potentially bored, even if you are none of these things.

- **Smile.** The power of a smile cannot be underestimated. A warm, natural smile communicates that you are friendly, approachable, and happy to be there having a conversation with that person or audience.
- **Genuine interest in other people.** People often feel good about other people they meet for the first time, when the person they are meeting makes them feel good about themselves. Positive first impressions are made by people who ask questions of others to show interest and concern.
- **Eye contact.** Our eyes can communicate something beyond our words. They can show emotions such as fear, happiness, and uncertainty, so are one of the major factors in someone's first impression of us.
- **Positive and upbeat attitude.** No one wants to be around people with a negative or cranky attitude. Having a positive attitude communicates that you can deal with just about anything that

happens and helps to ensure that your message is more positively received. 🍀



Photo: Getty Images/stockphoto/VioletaStamenova

Steve Aduato, PhD, is the author of five books including, "Lessons in Leadership." His sixth book, "Lessons in Leadership 2.0: The Tough Stuff," will be released in summer 2023. He is an Emmy® Award-winning anchor with programs airing on Thirteen/WNET (PBS) and NJ PBS. He has also appeared on CNN, NPR and NBC's Today Show. Steve Aduato's "Lessons in Leadership" video podcast with co-host Mary Gamba airs Sundays at 10:00 a.m. on News 12+. For more information visit [www.Stand-Deliver.com](http://www.Stand-Deliver.com)



# THINK TANK WITH STEVE ADUBATO

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# Health Commissioner Enlists Business Executives as Allies

By Diane C. Walsh  
Editor, COMMERCE

**N**J Health Commissioner Judith M. Persichilli considers the business community an ally in her department's mission to ensure the state's 9.1 million residents lead long healthy lives.

In an interview with *COMMERCE* Magazine, the commissioner said she believes the business sector "understands and embraces that our employees are our most valuable asset, and we owe them a certain level of vigilance."

Employers are keenly positioned to educate their workforce about infection prevention and control. In the workplace, the commissioner emphasized there must be good regular cleanings, proper ventilation, and sanitary procedures, she said. The crucial role business leaders play was most dramatically on display during the pandemic when many offices, stores and other jobs sites were forced to shut down for extended periods and essential businesses took extraordinary measures to safeguard workers and the community at large.

"Our obligation to our employees is not only to educate and train but really promote and encourage employees to take care of themselves," Persichilli said. Self-care includes regular health check-ups and screenings, enabling individuals to protect themselves and everyone else in their household, she said.

The state looked to Persichilli throughout the pandemic as she and Gov. Phil Murphy gave regular updates on the spread of the deadly coronavirus and what was being done to combat it. She was on the job only a few months when the first COVID case was diagnosed on March 4, 2020. To shepherd the state through this tumultuous time, Persichilli said she drew upon "absolutely every experience" in her professional career.

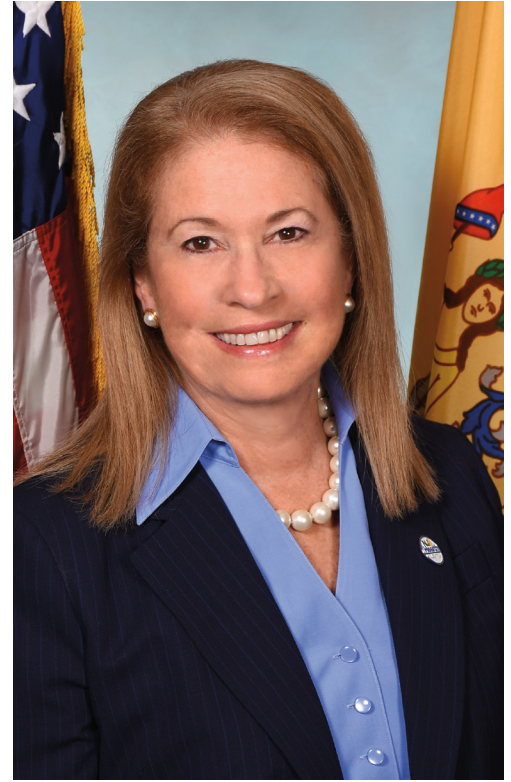
Before joining Gov. Murphy's cabinet, she was acting CEO of University Hospital in Newark, a state-owned 519-bed teaching hospital that also serves as the northern region's trauma center. Most of her career was spent in executive positions within the Catholic Health East hospital network and its successors. She was president emerita of CHE Trinity Health, the health ministry formed in May 2013 by the consolidation of Catholic Health East and Trinity Health of Livonia, MI. Earlier in her career Persichilli was CEO of St. Francis Medical Center in Trenton for eight years.

In 2006 the commissioner was inducted into the NJ State Nurses Association Hall of Honor. She received her nursing diploma from St. Francis Hospital School of Nursing; a bachelor of science in nursing summa cum laude from Rutgers University; and a master of arts in administration summa cum laude from Rider University.

When Persichilli discusses the lessons learned from the pandemic, foremost is the rapid, unpredictable and unprecedented way in which the virus spread, especially through asymptomatic people. The experience underscored the importance of information and data to develop effective strategies. The business community has an important role in curtailing any future outbreaks or public health emergencies by reporting any alarming situation to local health authorities, she said.

With more than 100 local health departments across the state, Persichilli said anytime an employer suspects a health risk or sees a pattern with sick employees "the first thing to do is pick up the phone."

More than 2.5 million cases of COVID were diagnosed in New Jersey and 36,000 people died from the virus. Thankfully, fatalities and



Judith M. Persichilli, New Jersey Health Commissioner

incidents of infection have declined dramatically in recent months. The efficiency of vaccines and therapies enabled the federal government to declare an end to the public emergency in May.

Even though COVID has not been eradicated, healthcare professionals can now manage it and Persichilli is looking forward to a time when it will be treated like the seasonal flu outbreaks. She suspects that is several years away, however, as the trajectory of the virus continues to be monitored.

Meanwhile, the commissioner said "Long COVID" continues to be a concern, especially in the business community as employers struggle with its effects on the workforce. Long COVID is understood as the lingering effects from the virus, such as aches, pains or "brain fog," which continue for weeks or months after the initial diagnosis. Persichilli said her department can now track its occurrence because a "diagnostic code" has been developed for it. "We have to continue to educate people that it is a real issue," said the commissioner, who added that preliminary reports show 10 to 15 percent of the population is suffering from some form of Long COVID. ❧



Long Covid symptoms are varied and can include aches and pain, exhaustion, and "brain fog" that cause disruptions in work and home life.

Photo: Getty Images/Stockphoto/Sean-Francis Bergeron



## STEVE ADUBATO'S LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

with co-host Mary Gamba

Sunday 10:00am  
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# Structure and Purpose: Planning Essentials



By Joseph P. Truncale, Ph.D.  
Contributing Editor

**M**any organizational leaders cite their instincts and having a “feel for the business” as reasons for their business success. Fair enough. But there comes a time in

any growing enterprise when having a plan in your head can bring limited results, frustrating the leader and the senior team.

Structured planning does not mean rigidity and a lack of creativity and experimentation. It does mean a process which will better enable and encourage this in a way that can elicit prioritized action items with assigned responsibility and trackable, measurable timelines and expected outcomes.

A key agenda item for an effective planning offsite session is allowing time for idea generation, and “The Four D’s”: Discussion, Dialogue, Debate and Decisions (which result in the assignment of responsibility to a designated member of the senior team). This is another reason why having an experienced, skillful

facilitator helping to build the agenda and then guide the process can be invaluable.

I’ve heard from many executives who lament the hollowness of their strategic sessions. Great discussions, lots of ideas and no shortage of problems, challenges and obstacles talked about. While these items are unique to the organization, the common thread is that few if any decisions are made. Even when they are, no actionable items, milestone dates, progress measurements or assignment of responsibilities are put in place. Many cite as evidence the fact that the same problems are brought up at meeting after meeting with little meaningful headway made.


At the same time, items that are crucial to the success of the enterprise and need to be talked out during strategy sessions are deflected or avoided altogether. It can be uncomfortable to address obstacles, flawed processes, outdated and frustrating policies, and “people issues”; yet these are often the most compelling areas of concern. Hitting these head on in strategic session can be the most impactful part of the planning process.

An essential element of the strategy session is to establish meeting ground rules at the onset. One of these should be to designate the meeting as a “safe place”; meaning that no subject, topic or discussion item is off limits. These can

be brought forward by any participant, the only stipulations being that it is done in a respectful manner and that no one becomes defensive of their efforts, projects, people or results. In fact, for these meetings to yield the best outcomes, candor must be part of the process. It does little to help move the enterprise forward if items that need to be worked out are glossed over or ignored altogether.

Every phase of a high-level strategy session can be greatly improved, and the value derived from the investment in time and energy maximized when preparation (before the meeting), participation (during the meeting) and performance (following the meeting) are stressed.

Bringing structure, discipline and process to strategy formulation and planning can move your team and your organization forward in an effective, meaningful way. And results will come very quickly.

For more information on ways to get the most out of your planning process, contact me at [joe@ajstrategy.com](mailto:joe@ajstrategy.com). 



Successful business planning should include “The Four D’s”: Discussion, Dialogue, Debate and Decisions

*Joseph P. Truncale, Ph.D., CAE, is the Founder & Principal of Alexander Joseph Associates, a privately held consultancy specializing in executive business advisory services.*

*He is the former CEO of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the world’s largest public relations organization. Prior to joining PRSA, Joe was President & CEO of NAPL, a business management association representing leading companies in the printing, graphic communications, mailing, fulfillment and marketing services industry.*

*Joe specializes in strategy, customer analysis and organizational effectiveness.*

*He is a graduate of Monmouth University and he holds a Masters’ Degree from Rutgers University. In 2011, he earned his Ph.D. in Media, Culture and Communications at New York University and was the recipient of the Prism Award for Academic Achievement. His dissertation was a ground-breaking study of the leadership styles of highly successful entrepreneurial business executives in the graphic communications industry.*

*Joe served as Co-Chair of the New York University Board of Advisors and is an adjunct faculty member at NYU teaching graduate courses in Executive Leadership, Financial Management and Analysis, Finance for Marketing Decisions, and Leadership: The C Suite Perspective. He resides in Colts Neck, NJ.*

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A man in an orange hoodie and grey shorts is stretching on a reddish-brown track. He is leaning forward with his hands clasped over his right knee, and his left leg is extended back. The background shows a blurred green field and trees.

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