



News & Views

JANUARY 2025

Upcoming Events

- **January 10: Dinner**
Reservation Deadline <https://forms.gle/PLNBYPKbYXBNi1Xq5>
- **January 16:** Monthly Dinner Meeting - 6 pm Giannilli's II
- **January 18:** BPW 95th Anniversary DeNunzio's @ Latrobe Airport - 10:30 am
- **February 7:** Board Meeting 6pm. Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.
All are welcome to attend.



As we bid farewell to 2024, our hearts hold both shadows and light. 2024 brought us moments that tested our strength, taught us resilience, and showed us who truly stands beside us when storms gather.

To those we lost - your absence echoes in the quiet moments, but your love continues to guide us forward.

To the challenges that brought us to our knees - thank you for showing us we are stronger than we knew.

Some of us carry scars that the world cannot see, fought battles in silence, and found courage in the darkest hours. Yet here we stand, breathing, hoping, and dreaming, still.

To 2024 - thank you for your lessons. To 2025 - we step toward you with open hearts, ready to write new stories of possibilities.

2024 has been a wonderful journey with you, a journey of learning. But there is so much more to learn in life, and about BPW. The New Year brings a renewed sense of hope, joy, and connection.

May 2025 bring you closer to believing in and achieving all your possibilities.

Here's to making more memories in 2025.

Barbara



NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Deadline for the next newsletter is Friday, February 7.
Please send committee reports, community events, articles, kudos and advertisements to cpalm121@comcast.net OR latrobebpw@yahoo.com before that date.



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January 2025

Member Spotlight



Debbie Franco

We are excited to shine a spotlight on Latrobe BPW member Debbie Franco, a dedicated professional and passionate advocate for our community. Debbie's commitment to both her career and BPW shows the impact that getting involved can have on personal and professional growth.

Debbie's enthusiasm for BPW is clear when she shares, "I love how our group gives back to the community, and I love being part of a group of women that are supportive and encouraging of each other." Her appreciation for the camaraderie and impact of BPW reflects the true essence of what makes our group so special: the collective strength of women supporting one another in both personal and professional pursuits.

For those considering becoming more involved, Debbie offers a great piece of advice: "Get involved! Go to meetings, sign up for events, chair a committee. The more you put into this group, the more you will definitely get out of it!" Her own involvement in BPW is a testament to the power of engagement and dedication to the organization's mission.

Debbie works as a Finance Specialist in the Loan Accounting Department at PNC, where she thrives in a supportive, collaborative environment. "I love the team I work with," she shares. "We are all supportive of each other and continuously improve our processes. I never stop learning." Her passion for both teamwork and continuous improvement showcases her dedication to growth, both professionally and personally.

When Debbie is not working or involved with BPW, she enjoys a variety of relaxing activities. "In my spare time, I enjoy listening to audiobooks and podcasts. In the warmer months, you'll find me gardening, swimming, star gazing, and listening to the Dave Matthews Band," she shares. A lover of live music, she enjoys concerts of all genres and, of course, spending quality time with her family.

Debbie's decision to join BPW was influenced by a close friend. "My friend, Michele Stoops, told me about the group and thought I would benefit from its networking aspects," Debbie explains. "I went to a meeting, found out all BPW does for the community, and I was hooked." The combination of community involvement and professional growth drew Debbie to BPW, and she has become a committed member ever since.

Outside of her professional and community roles, Debbie reveals a fun fact about herself: "I love puzzles. Logic puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, escape rooms... and I'm a closet nerd." Her love for puzzles highlights her analytical mind and problem-solving skills, which are just a few of the many qualities that make Debbie a unique and invaluable member of BPW.

Debbie's dedication to BPW shines through in her willingness to step up and take on leadership roles. "After only being a member for 2 months, I stepped up to chair the Scholarship/SOTM Committee when the position needed filling," she shares. "I did so for the next 4 1/2 years." Her leadership in this capacity, along with her passion for organizing events like the annual Spring Tea, shows just how deeply committed she is to making a difference.

Debbie's advice is simple but powerful: "Attend meetings, join committees, get involved!! You will make lifelong friends and memories!" Her personal experience with BPW is a testament to the life-changing connections and opportunities that arise from active participation. Thank you, Debbie, for your incredible contributions to BPW and our community.

If you haven't yet had the pleasure of meeting Debbie, make sure to introduce yourself at the next BPW event. With her warmth, leadership, and dedication, she is a true example of what BPW is all about!

January 2025

Guest Speaker



photo courtesy of Julie Muir

Rodney Lee Little II

The Latrobe Business & Professional Women's (BPW) Club is excited to announce its guest speaker for the January meeting: Rodney Lee Little II, President of the Top Dog Therapy Team, CEO of Youngwood Top Dog and Editor in Chief of The Top Dog Canine Chronicles. Rodney will share his inspiring journey, from his childhood love for animals to his triumph over life-threatening adversity, and how these experiences shaped his work with therapy dogs.

Rodney's lifelong passion for animals began in his small farm town in Westmoreland County, where he developed a deep connection with animals at a young age leading to clear calling working with animals. After joining the Army in 1999 and serving overseas, Rodney was introduced to German-style dog training, a skill he quickly adopted and carried back to the United States. His work with dogs expanded when he joined New Jersey K-9 Search and Rescue and the New Jersey Rescue and Recovery Unit. In 2007, Rodney returned to Pennsylvania, where he worked alongside police and law enforcement agencies on missing person cases and animal response teams until 2013. It was in 2014 that he launched Youngwood Top Dog Therapy Services, providing specialized dog training and community-based therapy dog programs.

However, Rodney's life changed dramatically on July 9, 2016. While leaving church on his Harley Davidson, Rodney was struck by a car, resulting in severe injuries. After a life-threatening crash and multiple surgeries, Rodney spent over a year in recovery, initially paralyzed from the waist down. He credits his recovery to his faith and determination, stating, "I stopped asking God to change my circumstances, and I asked God to use my circumstances to change me, and He did."

During his long recovery, Rodney's dog Sarge became his unwavering companion, providing him with emotional support and healing. Sarge, a retired working canine, now works alongside Rodney in the mission of Top Dog Therapy Services, which visits over 400 local facilities each year, bringing comfort and love to those who need it most.

In addition to his work with therapy dogs, Rodney's faith led him to pursue ministry. He was certified in 2021 and has since preached in various settings, including nursing homes and retirement centers. Together with his wife, Lara Custer, and their son Walker, Rodney continues to serve his community and the Lord.

About Youngwood Top Dog Therapy Services:

Founded by Rodney Little, Youngwood Top Dog Therapy Services provides specialized dog training and therapy dog programs. Their mission is to bring comfort and joy to those in need by utilizing the incredible bond between humans and dogs. Top Dog Therapy currently works with over 130 therapy dogs and serves over 400 facilities in the local community each year.

Donations appreciated:

- Paper towels
- Washcloths
- Dawn Dish soap
- Dish sponges
- Carpet scrubbing tools

January 2025

In Memory of Mary Ann Urban

Gone but never ever forgotten by any of us. Mary Ann was a dedicated member, committee chair, executive committee member, woman of the year, and past president of Latrobe BPW. She joined Latrobe BPW in February of 2001 and remained a dedicated member despite retiring to TN a few years ago. No one left a meeting without knowing Mary Ann's friendship or sharing a large laugh with her.

Her family has listed LBPW as the recipient of any donation in lieu of flowers.

Link to Obituary: <https://www.bilbreyfuneralhomeinc.com/obituary/mary-ann-urban>

Mary Ann was also devoted to her church community and for her we pray:

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May the souls of all the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
~Amen~



January 2025

SAD NEWS

Some sad news to share with you.

Our dear friend and long time member, Mary Ann Urban, passed away early New Year's Day, after a battle with cancer. Even after moving from Latrobe to Tennessee, she maintained her membership and contact with her BPW family.

Please keep her family in your prayers.

Cards may be sent to:

The Urban Family

53 Bingham Lane

Crossville, TN 38558

Dear Mary Ann. May you Rest in Peace! You will be remembered with love.

In Memory of Mary Ann Urban



Sisters



Latrobe BPW



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Mary Ann's wishes as per her family

January 2025



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Arnold Palmer Regional Airport, Latrobe, PA
\$30/person



Scan code to RSVP by January 10
www.latrobebpw.org



January 2025



Dinner Committee

January Dinner Meeting:

Date: January 16, 2025

Event Location: Giannilli's II,
Route 30 West, Greensburg

Deadline for Reservations:
Friday, January 10

PAYMENT OPTIONS:

Cash/Check/Credit \$25

Prepay via PayPal \$27 (link on
dinner reservation)

LINK TO RESERVE: [https://
forms.gle/PLNBYPKbYXBNi1Xq5](https://forms.gle/PLNBYPKbYXBNi1Xq5)

Questions about the dinner meeting?

Email: latrobebpwdinner@gmail.com

Membership

Please invite your friends, co-workers,
and wonderful women that you meet to
dinner.

Ask our membership team, Nicole Purnell
and Angela Apple for our "business" card
and membership application to share with
your guests.

RENEW HERE: [https://
forms.gle/renewbpwmembership](https://forms.gle/renewbpwmembership)

BPW Logo Wear

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through our member partner Unity Printing.
Order your gear by the end of each month
and it will be delivered to you at the following
month's meeting! Check out the great items
at: www.unityprinting.com/bpw



Membership Committee

Please review the membership directory information.

If there are any changes that need to be made, please complete the change
form using the google form (<https://forms.gle/nigAdKwK1jdiP1Nw5>). We
do have pockets of incomplete data for some members.

There is also now a **Business Appendage** added onto the end of the
directory if you would like to search by Business or Employer to connect
and support a Latrobe BPW Member.

January 2025

BPW Holiday Happenings



A great time was had by all at the December meeting and ornament exchange.

January 2025



Foundation

The Edith Oler Flanagan Disaster Fund is available to any BPW/PA member who has suffered a financial hardship caused by any reason, such as uninsured medical expenses, fire loss, termination of employment, etc. The awards are based on financial need. www.bpwpa.org

Public Relations

Important Social Media and Website Links!

Website: www.latrobebpw.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BPWLatrobe
(Business Site)

www.facebook.com/groups/latrobebpw
(Private Member Group—more informal;
Business Owners can run ads and share info
once weekly; Share Community Events)

Search for us on YouTube, Instagram and
LinkedIn

ISO: Chairwomen and Committee
members for the 2024-2025 year.
Please email latrobebpw@yahoo.com
if interested.

Editors Note:

Please send me content.

*Lots of articles and pictures make the
newsletter more interesting!*

Thank you ~Carol Palmer

Membership Committee

**Everything's
better when
we're together.**

**New members join for \$28 through April 30 2025
Invite a friend to join today!**



**Committee chairs: Send your
round-up items in for the next
newsletter's Round Up.
Committee Reports are due by
first Friday of each month. Send
them to cpalm121@comcast.net
OR latrobebpw@yahoo.com**

*Annual dues renewal May 1 for all members. \$2 processing fee if renewed online

December 2024



Prize Patrol Team,

We are ready to kick off the new year with another exciting act of generosity! Our next Random Act of Generosity will take place at **10AM on Monday, January 13**, when we'll be delivering hospitality snack bags to the hardworking Meals on Wheels drivers in our community.

This is a wonderful opportunity to show our appreciation for the dedication of these volunteers who bring meals and kindness to so many.

Let's spread some cheer and start the year off on a positive note!

If you'd like to join in the fun, please contact Angela Apple at:

✉ aapple@wpa.net

☎ 724-787-8718

We'd love to have you as part of the Prize Patrol team

Thank you for your continued generosity and support. Let's make this event a success together!



Latrobe BPW Member Enrichment Scholarship: Supporting Your Growth!

Did you know that Latrobe BPW offers a **Member Enrichment Scholarship** to help our members thrive professionally and personally?

This scholarship is designed to support members who are pursuing continued education, renewing professional licenses, or updating essential training. Whether you're advancing your career or gaining new skills, Latrobe BPW is here to invest in your success.

We believe in empowering our members to reach their fullest potential, and this scholarship is one way we put that belief into action.

Interested in applying?

Click here to access the application: https://www.latrobebpw.org/files/ugd/a64f0d_e149ceab57d443fd81cc5f6255d0c80c.pdf

Take advantage of this fantastic opportunity to grow, learn, and achieve your goals.

Latrobe BPW is proud to support you on your journey.

Spring Tea Updates:

Table Décor Swap / Sale—bring any Spring Tea table items to the January meeting. You will have an opportunity to buy / sell / swap items.

Old Tea Photos — if you have any photos of previous Spring Teas, please send them to either Debbie Franco or Alice Brasile.



January 2025

MEMBER NETWORKING — PLEASE SUPPORT OUR BPW BUSINESSES**Happy January Birthday to . .****11—Laura Guskiewicz****21—Kayla Srgo****24—Nicole Cecchini**


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Alice's Apples & Sweets will be taking a break from Vendor Shows this summer while I prepare for my daughter's wedding and enjoying our pool.

We are still available for special orders – anything from apples to cupcakes to a treats bouquet for that special dancer, swimmer, or graduate in your life. Customizable treats at a reasonable price. Contact me at 724-244-7246 or Alicesapples17@gmail.com

Thank you, Latrobe BPW members, as always for your support... you have all been incredible!



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Latrobe Business Professional Women

January 2025



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January 2025

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