

CALENDAR

Tuesday, June 24

Held by: Lehigh Valley Elite Network
Summary: Business networking lunch
Where: Texas Roadhouse, 6268 Hamilton Blvd., Allentown
Time: 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Cost: \$15, includes lunch
Contact: Michael Madden at 484-553-6992 or www.lehighvalleyelitenetwork.com

Tuesdays, June 24, July 1, 8, 15

Held by: Berks-Lehigh Chapter of Professional Referral Exchange
Summary: How to increase your business
Where: Starlite Diner, 233 Route 100, Fogelsville
Time: 7:30-9 a.m.
Cost: Free
Contact: Bill Fritz at 484-274-4115

Wednesday, June 25

Held by: Open Door Public Relations
Summary: Is every customer a good customer?
Where: City View Diner, 1831 MacArthur Road, Whitehall
Time: 9:30-11 a.m.
Cost: \$16 in advance, \$20 at door
Contact: Rita Guthrie at 610-703-5878 or idealady@opendoorlv.com

Thursday, June 26

Held by: Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Summary: Sharpening people skills
Where: Center for Business Excellence, 49 Commerce Drive, Wyomissing
Time: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Cost: \$110
Contact: Diane Reed at 610-376-6766 or dreed@greaterreadingchamber.org

Thursday, June 26

Held by: CREW Lehigh Valley
Summary: Transformation of Day-Timers to Smooth-On Inc.
Where: Smooth-On Inc., 5700 Lower Macungie Road, Macungie
Time: 8:30-10 a.m.
Cost: \$10 members, \$20 nonmembers
Contact: Francee Fuller at 610-398-0904 or www.crewlehighvalley.org

Thursday, June 26

Held by: Lehigh Valley Elite Network
Summary: Business networking lunch
Where: Texas Roadhouse, 4463 S. Mont Way, Easton
Time: 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Cost: \$15, includes lunch
Contact: Michael Madden at 484-553-6992 or www.lehighvalleyelitenetwork.com

please see **CALENDAR**, page 22

SUBMITTING ITEMS

Email calendar items two weeks in advance to jenniferg@lvb.com

BEHIND THE LIST WITH PERNA & ASSOCIATES MORTGAGE SOLUTIONS

Amazing opportunity for a business



Jose and Cathy Perna, owners of Perna & Associates Mortgage Solutions in Coopersburg, service homebuyers and owners, both residential and commercial, throughout the Lehigh Valley.

PHOTO/CHRISTOPHER HOLLAND

Buying a home in today's market can be burdensome. With an economy that's still rebounding from the 2008 recession and a housing market that's slowly bouncing back, real estate agents and mortgage brokers throughout the Greater Lehigh Valley are starting to see more stability and interest in homeownership.

Here to answer this week's "Behind the List" questions is Jose Perna, co-owner of Perna & Associates Mortgage Solutions in Coopersburg.

Lehigh Valley Business: How long has Perna & Associates Mortgage Solutions been operating in the Greater Lehigh Valley and what are its primary services?

Jose Perna: Perna & Associates was established in 2006 and opened its doors on July 1 of that year in Coopersburg. We had been in partnerships prior to that since November of 1990, and decided it was finally time to have our own company.

We are a licensed mortgage broker in Pennsylvania and Florida. As such, we primarily provide residential mortgage financing for anyone looking to purchase a home (primary, second home or investment property) or refinance their existing mortgage.

One of the reasons we are a bit different from other lenders/brokers is that we really want the borrower to know the whole mortgage process. If we can't help someone now, we help coach them to get in a better

position so that we can work with them in the future.

We are now working with children of past borrowers, which is pretty exciting, although it does show our age in the business.

LVB: What have been some hardships and opportunities that Perna has encountered throughout its years in business?

Perna: With the mortgage crisis that hit in 2006 through 2008, things have really slowed down for a couple of years. Many mortgage brokers that are like ourselves left the business. The slowdown of residential mortgages opened the door for our company to pursue working with commercial lenders and businesses, and we found that it added to our services that we were previously offering.

We have a very good reputation and a 20-year client base, so we were able to hang in there and continue to provide the quality service that we have always given. Rules and regulations may have changed and made lending a bit more difficult, but there is still an amazing opportunity for a business to thrive, if you do what's right for the consumer.

LVB: Do you provide mortgage services on both residential and commercial levels? Do you operate solely within the Lehigh Valley?

Perna: We do provide mortgage services on both the residential and commercial level as previously men-

tioned. For residential properties (less than four-unit properties), we're only allowed to work in the states of Pennsylvania and Florida.

Commercial lending is a little bit different and is not state restricted, but we tend to focus only on Pennsylvania residents, anywhere in the state, and if they have a property in Maryland, we will do our best to see if we can find a bank source for them.

LVB: How does Perna & Associates directly stimulate the local economy?

Perna: On the residential side, we stimulate the economy by getting our borrowers interest rates that are one-eighth to one-quarter [percentage point] lower than the bank or credit unions and can typically save them money on their closing costs. That means more money in the borrower's pocket that can be spent on other things.

There are still many that haven't refinanced into a lower interest rate, maybe due to credit glitches in the past, or that borrowers just didn't think they could qualify for a lower rate for various reasons. We love working with these borrowers that are really interested in learning about their options.

On the commercial side, we get entrepreneurs working capital to expand their business, consolidate debts, provide lower rates and loan payments that free up money to be used for other purchases.

LVB: What does the future look like for Perna & Associates? Does it

have plans for growth in the region?

Perna: We are extremely excited by what the future will be. As the economy continues to stabilize and as rents have risen dramatically, more and more young adults who now have steady jobs see the advantage of owning rather than renting, especially as home values are much lower than during the peak of the market.

On the commercial side, banks are always changing their "appetite" for commercial lending, and business people seek us out because of our many contacts, customer service and the types of financing we can get our borrowers.

As for the growth in the region, we are very patient in finding the right time to expand, if that is in the cards. The rules and regulations for having employees in the mortgage industry have honestly dampened the enthusiasm for growth of employees. We have employees that help us with keeping in touch with past borrowers, and we are always looking at new marketing ideas to expand our business.

We love working with interns from various local colleges, probably because we really enjoy teaching people what we do so they are better educated themselves, for their future.

COMPILED BY CHRISTOPHER HOLLAND

MORE AT LVB.COM

Video: Jose Perna gives advice to people seeking a mortgage broker.