

Integrating AI in the workplace

Chamber hosts summit at CSIU

BY VINCENT DIFONZO
THE STANDARD-JOURNAL

MILTON — The Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce (GSVCC) hosted its sixth annual Innovations Summit on Monday, with hands-on lessons on artificial intelligence (AI), how it can be used by local organizations and how it can solve problems in any workplace.

The day-long summit, held at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU), included a keynote speech on applying AI into the workplace and state-wide investments into the rapidly developing technology by Jen Gilburg, deputy secretary of technology and entrepreneurship at the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

Participants included representatives of local and regional businesses, non-profits, educational institutions, health care facilities and other organizations, who gathered to share how AI has been implemented across different industries, and how it can make work more efficient.

The Innovations Summit is hosted annually to educate members on



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From left, CSIU Chief Outreach Officer Dr. Bernadette Ulrich Boerckel, Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce Membership Director Chad North and Weis Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer Greg Zeh network during the sixth annual Innovations Summit.

emerging technologies and to prevent the region from “falling behind the times,” according to GSVCC Membership Director Chad North. For the past three years, the summits have been largely focused on AI.

“If you’re five years behind with AI, you’re more like 15 years behind,” North said. “AI is a viable resource for problem solving. (We want) to erase fear of using AI.”

North said he hopes participants walk away with a newfound “AI toolbox” at

their disposal.

CSIU Chief Outreach Officer Dr. Bernadette Ulrich Boerckel said the summit addresses issues like using AI for customer solutions, AI data security and how AI can be used for good — not by replacing human jobs, but by making it easier for people to do their jobs efficiently and filling workforce gaps.

“We’re going to need (AI) to survive in Pennsylvania with an aging population. We’re gonna need technology. So we’re thinking

about how to do it responsibly,” Boerckel said.

To educate participants on implementing AI at their workplace, attendees broke into smaller afternoon breakout sessions that focused on specific aspects of AI ranging from cybersecurity to sales to workflow management.

Boerckel, alongside Community Giving Foundation CEO Kara Seesholtz, led one breakout session that focused on

Summit

FROM PAGE A1

using ChatGPT to create a chatbot that's fine-tuned for a specific need, ranging from bots designed to write professional emails to a bot that helps write social media posts. They cited it as an example of how AI can transform everyday tasks in the workplace.

The custom GPTs can be tailored to respond based on specific documentation you feed into it, and can be modified in its tone, its

target audience, what it should and shouldn't do, and what format it answers questions in, Boerckel said.

She showed off one GPT she made that's tailored to assist in the creation of a business strategy framework, trained from a framework developed by a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professor. She said the GPT can answer questions ranging from what ideas are needed to what customers are

looking for.

"To me, this is a very helpful framework to get me thinking about my specific problem," Boerckel said.

Steven Stumbris, one of the summit's organizers, said he believes AI must be utilized by small businesses to compete in a tough, but growing, economy. Stumbris is the director of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Bucknell University.

"For the past three years, (the SBDC) has been all in on AI," Stumbris said. "(We are) making sure small businesses aren't left behind in an accelerating economy... We're working with the chamber to help small business owners have the knowledge of the tools they need to be successful."

He emphasized the importance of discussing practical applications of AI for local businesses, rather

than theoretical discussions about it. He hopes attendees left the summit "with at least one AI tool they can start using in their business tomorrow."

In the past, major technological changes, such as the emergence of online shopping, have challenged local businesses in ways they can't compete, but with AI business owners can utilize it right now, Stumbris said.

"Every single small busi-

ness owner can use an AI tool to run their business better," he said. "This technology is a place where small businesses may not have a disadvantage if they learn how to use AI tools appropriately."

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