

Short film series promotes area growth

BY CINDY HINDLE

A series of short films focusing on various McKees Rocks area manufacturers and "makers," as they are referred to in the films, premiered at Stowe's Parkway Theater & Film Lounge April 11.

McKees Rocks CDC

The shorts, a series of films entitled "Making It...In McKees Rocks," tell the stories of area businesses, including Lane Steel, Ace Wire and Spring and Abjuration Brew Co.

The films were created as part of a larger push by the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation to promote the Sto-Rox communities and bring more companies and new residents to the area. Gazette 2.0 was another of the featured "makers" in the series.

"I love what's happening here. I love that they opened this theater, and that they are going to be opening the Roxian Theatre," said Julie Bruno, who thinks the campaign is a wonderful idea and can't wait to see more improvements in the area. "Ace Wire has been there since 1936. It's a family business and it's great that they were featured."

Bruno handles accounts payable at Ace Wire and can be seen in the film featuring her employer. She was one of several featured employees who joined with local politicians, business owners, residents and



others to catch the debut.

Notably in attendance were Marie Incorvati, Stowe Township's retiring secretary; Mayor Jack Muhr and Bill Beck, former McKees Rocks secretary.

Taris Vrcek, executive director of the CDC, emceed the event, introducing contributors and others before explaining the thought process behind the films.

"This is part of our strategy," said Vrcek. "It is a central part of us rebranding this community and changing perceptions. A

lot of us know that McKees Rocks doesn't always get mentioned in the best light. It's really a shame because things that happen every day in this community, the really exciting and innovative things, don't get talked about."

The series is the direct result of suggestions made by real estate and land-use experts from the Urban Land Institute (ULI) who spent a week in McKees Rocks during the fall of 2016 to provide advice on the best ways to rebuild and develop key

areas of the town. A \$100,000 grant through the Allegheny Conference allowed for the visit to occur.

"The ULI suggested that McKees Rocks embrace its grittiness and market to the small manufacturers, 'makers' as they are called now," said George "Spike" Riel of Rockerfeller Communications, the film production company.

Riel, who at the time of ULI's visit was council president in McKees Rocks, was in on discussions as to how best accomplish some of the goals set forth by the Washington, D.C. based group.

A marketer at heart, Riel came up with the concept behind the "making it" campaign.

"Steel, beer, whatever these businesses happen to be making... Let's feature the invisible people, the people that weren't on the news this morning," said Riel.

The films will be released regularly on social media platforms like Facebook to promote and draw new business and workers to the area. Additional segments are in the works.

The first installment will continue to be shown in its entirety at community events. It is scheduled to be shown prior to the May McKees Rocks council meeting.

Riel asks that people share the films whenever they see them on social media. "Share it with your friends and neighbors and let's show McKees Rocks off and let's show them what other people are doing in McKees Rocks, in the "Making It" spirit.