

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From Goldman Sachs to Main Street: A Harvard-trained data scientist and NEPA native is moving away from optimizing the digital world and betting on her hometown to fix the offline one.

Ashley Fitzgerald — a NEPA native, Goldman Sachs alum, and 2026 Harvard President's Innovation Challenge semi-finalist — launches *The Hobbieist*, a radically analog, phone-free skills club in downtown Pittston.

PITTSSTON, PA — May 2026 — After more than a decade building novel data and AI systems — from the Executive Office at Goldman Sachs to a patent-pending marketing technology that was named a semi-finalist in this year's Harvard President's Innovation Challenge — Ashley Fitzgerald is turning her attention to a different kind of unsolved problem: helping communities rebalance and elevate daily life in the digital age.

This July, the Clarks Summit native and Abington Heights High School graduate will open **The Hobbieist: Skills Club**, a private skills club for adults in downtown Pittston. The Hobbieist is a response to the gap Fitzgerald noticed when friends from different backgrounds and locations were all complaining about the same things: the difficulty of meeting new people, developing healthier habits and routines, and feeling burnt out from being accessible 24/7.

Her background, she says, trained her to recognize flaws in complex systems and engineer solutions to fix them. Once she saw the pattern, she realized she could focus her skills toward the offline, human experience rather than the online, digital ones she had spent her career solving.

From there, the club took shape — adults-only and centered on expert-led, immersive classes. Operating under the motto "*Lessons, for Life,*" the curriculum spans five core areas — *Creative Pursuits, Presence & Entertaining, Essential Life Skills, Hearth & Garden, and Living Well* — covering everything from watercolor and calligraphy to home repair, hosting, and intentional daily practices. The lineup wasn't guesswork: Fitzgerald surveyed prospective members and built the curriculum around what people actually said they wanted to learn. Each course runs four sessions, once a week, two hours each.

A Radical Balance: AI by Day, Analog by Night

There is a deliberate, striking irony: Fitzgerald spends her days building artificial intelligence, yet the club she is opening asks members to leave their screens at the door. The space is intentionally free of electronics and Wi-Fi, and strictly food- and alcohol-free, to ensure deep presence and real human interaction.

By understanding how technology is engineered to capture our attention, Fitzgerald was able to create the opposite: a physical space where people can go to take theirs back. Operationally, she used her AI development and entrepreneurial acumen to build an efficient infrastructure that lets her offer in-person instruction for \$12 to \$18 an hour. As Fitzgerald puts it, “There’s real innovation in our business model and operations infrastructure — it’s how The Hobbieist can pay instructors among the highest per-hour rates in the region while keeping prices this low for members. Rather ironically, the poison was leveraged to create the antidote.”

Betting on Small-Town America

For Fitzgerald, launching in the Wyoming Valley is both a strategic business decision and a personal mission — the first step in a broader initiative to build for-profit ventures that enrich everyday life offline while helping revitalize small and mid-sized American communities.

“We’re building this in Pittston because we believe more people are beginning to realize that the version of success we’ve been sold — one centered around big-city living and endless consumption — was better in marketing materials than it is in real life. As someone who’s been to that mountaintop, I can say that hearing crickets at night is better than hearing horns, knowing your neighbors is better than hustling past strangers, and building a life rooted in purpose, capability, and connection is better than endlessly chasing the next thing off the conveyor belt. I think people have wanted to move away from this digital life for a while, but they had nowhere to go. The Hobbieist is that space.”

— ASHLEY FITZGERALD, FOUNDER

Rooted in the sense of belonging she grew up with in Northeast Pennsylvania, Ashley Fitzgerald is building more than a business — she’s building connection and self-empowerment.

“It’s the opportunity of a lifetime to apply nearly two decades of experience to solving the challenges we face as a society increasingly captured by the digital world — and to use technology not to replace community, but as the means to rebuild it.”

— ASHLEY FITZGERALD, FOUNDER

The club opens at 131 N. Main Street in downtown Pittston in July 2026. To sign up or fill out instructor applications, visit thehobbieistskillsclub.com.



ABOUT THE HOBBIEIST

The Hobbieist is a private skills club for adults in downtown Pittston, Pennsylvania, founded on the belief that confidence comes from capability. Through expert-led, immersive, phone-free classes, members build dynamic skillsets, cultivate taste, and curate a life of their own design. Lessons, for life.

ABOUT THE FOUNDER

Ashley Fitzgerald is a data scientist and the founder of DeliverAI Solutions, an AI and machine-learning company behind the patent-pending Content Mix Model™. A 2026 semi-finalist in the Harvard President's Innovation Challenge, her career spans more than a decade in data and analytics — including time as an associate in the Executive Office at Goldman Sachs, where she led global analytics for brand marketing, plus senior analytics roles at Ad Results Media and Approvation. A graduate of Abington Heights High School in Clarks Summit, she is completing a Master of Liberal Arts in Data Science from Harvard Extension School and holds a B.A. in Economics from Ithaca College.

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