

The Challenge Program

Incentives for success

BY WASHINGTON COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Challenge Program, Inc. was founded in 2003 by Daniel Perkins, CEO/President of MTS Technologies, Inc. Mr. Perkins, a Johnstown, Pennsylvania native, wanted to create a program to give back to the community that supported him during his developing years. During a conversation with Barbara Grandinetti, an executive from Crown American Realty Trust, they came up with the idea of creating a program to award students for superior performance. They used a high school located in Johnstown, where Ms. Grandinetti served as a board member, to conduct the pilot program. The program formally became The Challenge Program with Ms. Grandinetti serving as the Founding Executive Director.

The mission of The Challenge Program is to motivate students by providing financial incentives for successes they achieve while in school, as well as build a bridge between high school students and the business community. Community and schools are the

bases for society and the program unites both. By connecting education and business, the program is a way to help the community and economy adapt to the dramatically changing employment landscape from primarily steel and coal to high tech.

Since its inception, The Challenge Program has had a measurable effect on students. Educators say that their students have a renewed focus on achieving higher grades, better attendance and an increase in community service.

Having been well received in schools throughout Pennsylvania and Delaware, the program has grown significantly. In 2006-2007, the program will engage nearly 70,000 students in 74 schools. At the end of the year, more than 800 students will receive checks totaling \$222,000.

The Challenge Program is a proven success in motivating students to perform well in school by providing these incentives. The program works together with local high school students and the business community. It not only helps to encourage school performance, but also serves as an intro-



THE CHALLENGE PROGRAM

Pictured left to right: Barbara Grandinetti, Executive Director, United States Representative John Murtha, Daniel Perkins, Chairman of the Board/Founder and Renee Shaw, Senior Manager of Business Development.

duction to the work world that offers a similar reward system for excellent performance. For more information visit www.thechallengeprogram.org.