

# Challenge Program nudges \$1M mark

**A**t the conclusion of the 2008-09 school year, The Challenge Program Inc. will surpass a cumulative total of \$1 million awarded to deserving high school students.

This milestone will be reached by awarding checks to 12 students in each of the 111 high schools participating in the program throughout Pennsylvania, Delaware and West Virginia.

The Challenge Program, a nonprofit organization, partners with businesses located within each school district's immediate community to help fund the awards offered by the program.

Businesses that partner with The Challenge Program may serve as ambassadors to the program and the businesses' leaders are invited to speak to students in their partnering schools twice a

year to educate the students about job opportunities and entrepreneurship that exist within their communities.

"I think surpassing the \$1 million milestone is indicative of the need for business/education partnerships," said Barbara Grandinetti, executive director.

The Challenge Program has experienced rapid expansion in its five years of operation, from one pilot school in the 2002-03 school year.

"Our expansion strategy was to head west into Allegheny County and the



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Pittsburgh area," Grandinetti said.

"At the same time, we are looking to expand into Philadelphia."

The Challenge Program also welcomed a handful of West Virginia schools to participate in the program in 2008-09.

"The fact that we have interest from contiguous states is a testament to the effectiveness of the program," Grandinetti said. "Our expansion is only restricted by securing new funding sources.

"Businesses invest in us because our program is an investment in the future,"

Grandinetti added.

"There is nothing more important to business than education, because youth are the future of our communities."

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*This article is part of a human interest series that will feature past recipients of The Challenge Program's four award categories: Most Improved, Best G.P.A., Most Community Service and Best Attendance. The Challenge Program is a nonprofit organization located in Johnstown that provides financial incentives to students for successes they achieve while still in high school. The Challenge Program also aims to provide a bridge between high-school students and the local business community.*

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**BARBARA GRANDINETTI,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE CHALLENGE PROGRAM**