

Student follows in footsteps of sister

Olivia Cortese told local businessmen why she believes The Challenge Program Inc. is worth their investment.

Cortese is a 2009 Challenge Program award winner for Best GPA-Sophomore at Conemaugh Township High School.

Speaking at a stakeholder breakfast held at TCP headquarters on July 15, Cortese said she first learned about The Challenge Program through her sister, a previous award winner and active participant in the program.

"My sister won the Best GPA award from The Challenge Program Inc. three times, and I know that it has played a key role in her success in high



KAYLA WASHKO
tribdem@tribdem.com

school and college," Cortese said. "I am trying to follow in her footsteps, and so I thought to myself: 'I'm going to work hard, too.'"

Cortese mentioned that aside from winning the Best GPA Award, she and her sister also have another family tradition:

How they spend their award money.

"We put about half (of the money) aside until Christmas," she said. "And then we go on a big shopping spree at The Dollar Store."

"We buy necessities and essentials that mothers may need at that time of the year and take them to the women at Mom's House. We want to let them know that they're not forgotten at that special time of the year."

In addition to speaking about the impact the program has made in her life, Cortese said she has seen changes in other students' behavior as a result of their participation.

"When my friend heard about The Challenge Program, she

"What better thing to invest in? We are the future."

OLIVIA CORTESE

wanted to win the Most Improved Award," Cortese said.

"She worked hard and went from being a D or C student to honor roll."

Cortese said that although her friend didn't end up winning the Most Improved Award, she believes her friend's newfound motivation will reap benefits in the future.

"The work ethic and study habits she developed as a result

of the program will last a lifetime," she said.

Cortese thanked TCP's business ambassadors for their involvement in the program, noting that their support is valued by Conemaugh Township students.

"I know this economic climate is tough," she said, "but you are making a difference to us."

"What better thing to invest in? We are the future."

The Challenge Program Inc. awards at Conemaugh Township High School are sponsored by All-State Insurance.

The Challenge Program Inc. partners with businesses to provide financial incentives to high school students.