

The Challenge Program

BY SYLVIA CAVALLO
for the Washington County
Chamber of Commerce

Ron Lincoski is no stranger to a challenge. He has been involved in boy scouts since first grade, and throughout high school he planned and completed several significant Eagle Scout projects.

Thanks to programs like The Challenge Program, Inc., headquartered in Johnstown, PA, efforts of teenagers with drive and vision like Lincoski do not go unrecognized.

The Challenge Program (TCP) began in the 2003-2004 school year with one participating school. Since then the program has grown to 109 participating schools in Pennsylvania, Delaware and West Virginia. The program awards 12 students in the sophomore, junior and senior grade levels for top performance in four award categories: Most Community Service, Most Improved, Best Attendance and Best GPA.

Presently, 11 Washington County schools participate in the program and more than 6,500 hours of community service have been submitted by students in Washington County schools seeking to win the program's Most Community Service Award.

"Educators in Pennsylvania and surrounding states continue to show an interest in participating in the program, so our goal eventually is to take The Challenge Program, Inc. to the national level," said Barb Grandinetti, TCP's Executive Director.

"In order to take that step, we must continue to establish partner-



Ronald Lincoski, California Area High School graduate and a three-time Challenge Program award winner.

ships with organizations who believe in investing in the accomplishments of tomorrow's workforce: the high school students of today.

"Our goal is to provide our youth with the opportunity to do great things, to expose them to enterprises that will make life better for not only their generation, but future generations."

Lincoski, a graduate of California Area High School, was a TCP winner for three consecutive years, earning the Community Service Award in his sophomore and junior

years and the Best Attendance Award as a senior.

"It allowed me to push myself," said Lincoski. "The first \$250 award allowed me to have money to put into my next community service project. The second time, I got to keep it. I am grateful to the program for giving me something extra to strive for."

Not only do students benefit from TCP. The program also partners with businesses in the school community to provide the cash incentives for students and to build business-education partnerships. It enables business representatives the unique opportunity to address full student assemblies about their company's workforce development needs and to speak about what it takes to be successful.

TCP has been in operation with Washington County High Schools since the 2006-2007 school year, and in 2009, was presented to 5,590 Washington County sophomores, junior and seniors. To date, TCP has distributed a total of \$69,000 to

272 Washington County High School students.

Washington County Ambassadors of the program are: Auma Actuators and Centimark (Canon-McMillan); Charleroi Chiropractic Pain and Wellness and Solar Power Industries (Ringgold); CONSOL Energy (West Greene and Cameron-WV high Schools); Dynamet, Inc. (Washington); Dyno Nobel, Inc., Model Cleaners and Mon Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce (Mon Valley CTC); Progeny Systems (Bentworth, Beth-Center, Burgettstown, California and Charleroi); Range Resources (Chartiers-Houston, Trinity, Avella and Western Area CTC).

TCP is excited about The WildSide Teambuilding Challenge 2009, the first event of its kind geared toward providing benefits to businesses.

The WildSide Teambuilding Challenge 2009 will be held on Friday, Aug. 14, from noon to 4 p.m., at

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The WildSide at Nemacolin Woodlands Resort in Farmington, PA.

The event begins with lunch, followed by employee teambuilding activities. Proceeds from the event will benefit TCP, Inc.

All area businesses are invited to send their employees to participate in the afternoon's corporate teambuilding activities which will focus on communication, teamwork, team-strategy, leadership and networking skills. Participants will rotate through Low Ropes initiatives, where they'll gain knowledge about how problem-solving, communication and collaboration can be paramount to their success. The afternoon will also involve lots of fun with team participation in bowling, the RC Race Track and a climbing wall (optional). The event will conclude with medal presentations to the top performing teams.

The cost for the event is \$100 per employee or \$450 for 5 employees. To register, send a check, payable to "The Challenge Program, Inc.," to 1001 Broad Street, Suite 210, Johnstown, PA 15906 by August 6, 2009. Credit card payments can also be made. For more information, contact Mary Dreliszak, Senior Manager of Program Development at 724.984.0860 or at dreliszakm@tcpinc.org.



Range Resources is also sponsoring The Challenge Program awards at Trinity High School. From left are Mario Vignetti, Western Area CTC student; Shawn Clark, Frac Flowback Operations Supervisor, Eastern Reservoir Services; Autumn Haines, Community Relations Specialist, Range Resources; Matt Pitzarella, Public Affairs Director, Range Resources; Jeanette Sekelik, Western Area CTC student; Mike Forgione, Senior Engineer, Range Resources; and Mary DeProspero-Adams, Western Area CTC, Supervisor of Vocational Education.

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