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Program helps build careers

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JOHNSTOWN — Hank Parke, business development director for PBS Coals, said that The Challenge Program Inc.'s partnership with local businesses is a great way to inform students of job opportunities, especially opportunities in the coal industry.

PBS Coals sponsors The Challenge Program awards at Shade High School.

The Challenge Program is a nonprofit organization that provides a \$250 cash incentive to students for achievement in each of four areas – community service, academic excellence, academic improvement and attendance – in the sophomore, junior and senior grade levels.

Parke said that PBS Coals is a “perfect fit to sponsor Shade High School” because it gives the company the chance to send a positive message to students in their area.

“Our company is growing, but many people are not aware of that,” Parke said. “We have a variety of rewarding career opportunities available in the coal industry, and we can get that word out when we address the Shade students at The Challenge Program’s assemblies.”

By presenting these career opportunities, Parke believes that students begin to take school more seriously to prepare for their futures.

“Attendance and punctuality are exceptionally important to all employers,” Parke said. “We also look for candidates who are willing to work hard to improve themselves. In this weak economy, an applicant with a high GPA and commitment to their community will surely stand out. The Challenge Program reinforces these categories through their awards.”

For students wishing to stay in the area after graduation, Parke said that The Challenge Program connection to a variety of local businesses is essential.

Students are able to see successful people who have emerged from their own neighborhoods and thus may be motivated to do the same.

“So many times I hear people say that there aren’t any good jobs around here,” Parke said.

“Young people need to know that there are a variety of challenging careers available that are close to home. The Challenge Program Inc. truly informs students of those opportunities.”

The Challenge Program Inc. is a nonprofit organization that partners with business to motivate high school students both in and out of the classroom. This partnership creates good habits in students and provides businesses with tangible results on their

investment.