

# Neighbors

KANAWHA VALLEY

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## 'Challenge Program' offers high school students cash awards

Business sponsors sought for expansion to more schools

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Students in the 10th through 12th grades at South Charleston, Sissonville and Nitro high schools now have additional incentives to do well in school.

Through partnerships with businesses, foundations and individuals, The Challenge Program, a nonprofit organization, motivates high school students with monetary awards.

Students in 10th, 11th and 12th grades who excel in the categories of academic excellence, academic improvement, attendance and community service will be eligible for \$250 awards at the end of the school year.

Twelve awards, four in each of those grades, will be given to winning students for a total amount of \$3,000 awarded at the participating schools.

At SCHS, Dow Chemical Company's West Virginia Operations is sponsoring The Challenge Program.

It was introduced to sophomore, junior and senior students at SCHS during grade-level orientation assemblies on Jan. 7.

"Dow Chemical is proud to partner with The Challenge

Program at South Charleston High because the program helps students develop good habits in high school that are essential for success when they enter the work force," said Mark Hall, human resources site services leader for Dow.

Hall conducted the SCHS assemblies to introduce the program at the school along with Dow's Supply Chain Planner Tom Moody and Challenge Program Development Manager Kelly Merritt, both SCHS alumni.

According to Merritt, the program is also underway at Sissonville High School, where it is sponsored by NGK Spark Plugs.

"It will soon be underway at Nitro High School, sponsored by Wal-Mart," Merritt said in an e-mail.

Merritt, along with several Wal-Mart representatives, will present The Challenge Program at Nitro High on Wednesday, Jan. 26.

"Wal-Mart, NGK and Dow have each invested good money in this program to improve the educational attainment of students," he said.

Merritt said there are currently no Putnam County high schools participating in the program, but three schools, Buffalo, Winfield and Poca high schools have expressed interest.

"I am contacting businesses in Putnam County with the

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goal of obtaining a sponsor for each of those schools. Any business interested should contact me."

According to The Challenge Program website ([www.tcpinc.org](http://www.tcpinc.org)), Dan Perkins, owner, and CEO of MTS Technologies, founded TCP in 2003.

Perkins, a Johnstown, Pa., native, wanted to create a program to give back to the community that supported him during his developing years.

He sought to create a program that would further motivate high school students to succeed and achieve even greater things while in high school and beyond.

Since 2004, through the support of businesses, foundations, and individuals, The Challenge Program, Inc. has

been introduced to more than 250,000 students in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Delaware, and by the end of the 2010-2011 school year, checks totaling more than \$1.7 million will have been presented to more than 6,800 high school students.

The Challenge Program welcomes additional school and business involvement. For more information, contact Kelly Merritt at 304-993-3625 or at [merrittk@tcpinc.org](mailto:merrittk@tcpinc.org).

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