

Challenge Program unites businesses, nonprofits, applauding achievements

By [Judy Kroeger](#), DAILY COURIER
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About the writer

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Area businesses have partnered with The Challenge Program Inc., a nonprofit organization, to celebrate student achievements in attendance, academic improvement, academic excellence and community service.

The business sponsorships allow participating schools to provide \$250 cash awards in each category to a sophomore, a junior and a senior.

Connellsville Area and Geibel Catholic high schools and the Connellsville Area Career and Technical Center have participated in the program for the six years of its existence.

Mary Dreliszak, director of program development, said more than 50,000 students in 124 participating schools in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Delaware can participate.

A student advisory board in each participating school champions the program, introduces other students to it, encourages them to vie for an award and provides feedback on its effectiveness.

Connellsville Area's student advisory board held a kick-off assembly.

"I've done 25 or more assemblies," Dreliszak said. "This one engaged students in a bigger way and it was the best I've seen. The Challenge Program is something you don't sign up for to be in it. If you are in it, you're in it to win it. The Connellsville assembly used a 'Minute to Win it' theme to introduce the program."

Students said they are inspired by the program.

"I liked seeing the student excitement and their attitude coming onstage," said Ethan Keedy, CAHS senior and past community service winner.

"It was a group effort," said Chris Dreliszak, Geibel senior.

Past winners may win again, Mary Dreliszak said. They are eligible for The Challenge Program Student of the Year, which Keedy won last year. "Ethan was the overall winner in all four states in which we operate."

Find out more

More information about the program is available at www.tcpinc.org.

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