

Portage Area HS participates in Challenge Program

By Emily Stewart
of Mainline Newspapers

Portage — Portage Area High School is among 15 schools in the district and Johnstown area participating in a program which provides students with incentives for success.

What exactly is The Challenge Program? Kathy Holtzman, the program's community outreach specialist, further explained that it's a bridge between students in high school and the business community by providing incentives to students for successes they achieve while in school.

And the program isn't just about money. It's also about providing an effective means to reversing the local "brain drain".

Holtzman noted, "The 'pilot' program at Bishop McCort was such a success, that's why it's being continued. In 2004, 10 schools participated in the program; and this year, we have 15."

During a recent presentation at PAHS, High School Principal

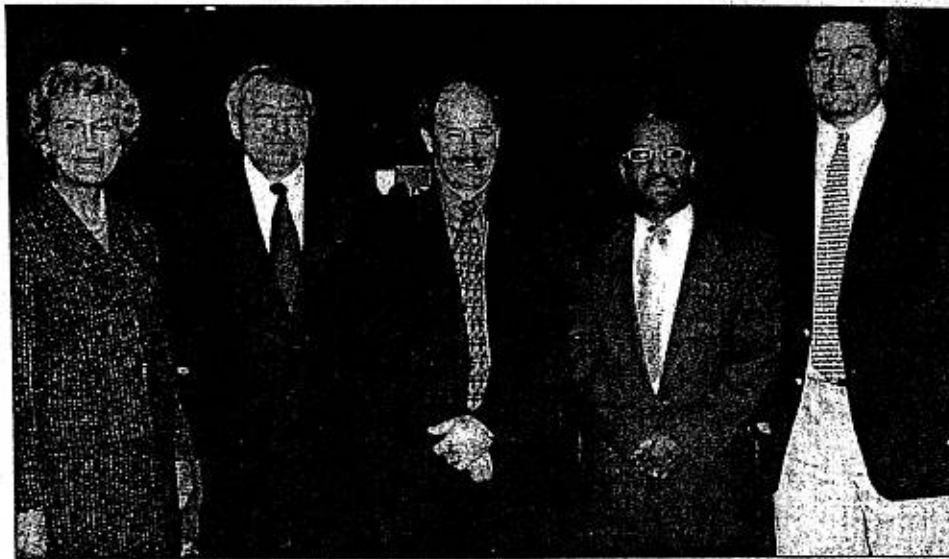
Thomas J. Kakabar, noted, "This program involves money for you — the students."

In addition to Kakabar and Holtzman, other speakers included Portage Area's busi-

ness sponsors, Steven Tucker, president of the Memorial Medical Center, and Robert Eyer of Portage, managing partner of Wessel & Company, a regional Certified Public

Accounting firm headquartered in Johnstown, known for its expertise in tax consulting, auditing and accounting, litigation

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Portage Area High School is participating in the Challenge Program which is designed to build a bridge between the students and business community by providing incentives to the students for their successes. Speakers at a recent presentation at the PAHS, from left, are: Kathy Holtzman, Robert Eyer, Steven Tucker, Edward Washington and Thomas J. Kakabar. Photo by Emily Stewart.

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tion support services, and business consulting services since 1958.

Eyer strongly believes in community involvement, which he has instilled in the members of Wessel & Company. Currently, the members of the company serve on 41 community organizations and committees.

His motivation for community service is simply to make our community a better place to live and work. Eyer said he was very fortunate to have parents who instilled in him that "if you live and work in a community, you must give something back."

Tucker was named the president of Memorial and Good Samaritan Medical Centers in 1997. He is responsible for management and coordination of hospital activities; leadership in establishing current and long-range objectives, business plans and policies; setting goals for hospital operations, human resources and financial performance; and providing direction and management of hospital operations.

Like Eyer, he is also involved with numerous community and professional organizations.

The students were also addressed by Edward Washington of MTS Technologies, Challenge

Program's executive director of program development. The program's founder is Daniel Perkins, and Barbara Grandinetti serves as executive director of Business and Education.

Holtzman, who is a former Cambria County Commissioner, stated, "\$2,500 is awarded per school. Ten awards of \$250 each will be presented at Portage Area, and sophomores, juniors and seniors participate in the program.

"The awards include three for attendance, three for community service and three for most-improved student. And one senior, with the highest grade average, will receive an award in the spring."

She noted, "The 10 Portage Area students and their business sponsors will attend the 2005 Showcase for Commerce on June 3 at the Cambria County War Memorial in Johnstown."

In addition to PAHS, students (and business ambassadors) at the event will include these schools: Bishop Carroll, Bishop McCort, Central Cambria, Conemaugh Township, Conemaugh Valley, Ferndale Area, Forest Hills, Greater Johnstown, Greater Johnstown Career and Technology, Northern Cambria, Penn Cambria, Richland, Westmont, Hilltop and Windber Area.