

Program obtains funding

U.S. Rep. John P. Murtha (D-Johnstown) has announced the awarding of a Department of Justice grant for The Challenge Program Inc.

The grant will enable the program to expand its efforts to motivate high school students by rewarding them for their success in school and in their communities.

"This program helps stem the brain drain and contributes to regional economic development," Murtha said. "The Challenge Program connects business leaders and high school students and enables young people to recognize opportunities and discover value in their community."

Within each participating school, students compete for cash awards recognizing significant academic achievement and community service.

Dan Perkins, founder of The Challenge Program, said, "This grant enables us to build upon a program born in the greater Johnstown community. Our immediate plans are to expand in the region to include Fayette, Greene, Washington, Westmoreland, Indiana, Armstrong and Allegheny counties. The long-term goal is to make The Challenge Program a national program."

The Challenge Program began with one local school distributing \$2,500 in the 2003-04 school year. The program has grown dramatically to include 33 schools, and last year distributed more than \$100,000 in cash awards to students.

For more information, call Barbara A. Grandinetti, executive director of The Challenge Program Inc., at 814-533-7403.