

Bentworth High students eligible for cash incentives

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Walt Kitonis, president of Progeny Systems in Bentleyville, urged Bentworth High School students Thursday to dream big and qualify for student achievement grants his company is sponsoring. (SCOTT BEVERIDGE/O-R)

BENTLEYVILLE -- Students at Bentworth High School will be taking home cash with "no strings attached" for strong achievements.

The Challenge Program Inc., a nonprofit from Johnstown, will be handing out \$250 grants to 14 students in the spring in several categories, including those to students who perform the most community service. Others will be rewarded for attendance and grades.

"If you show up for school, you're likely to show up for work," said Barbara Grandinetti, the program's executive director.

Founded to serve one school district in 2003, the program has grown to include 70 school districts in nine counties. Charleroi Area High School also was brought under its umbrella this term.

The program finds business partners to fund the grants and use the platform to encourage students to seek employment in their hometown areas. Defense contractor Progeny Systems near Bentleyville will sponsor Bentworth.

"In order for us to be successful, we have to find local talent," said Walt Kitonis, president of Progeny Systems, while urging Bentworth students to set high goals in life.

U.S. Rep. John Murtha, D-12th District, also spoke to the students, lending his support to the program.

"This is an important thing that I like to be involved in," said Murtha, who presented the project with a \$70,000 donation from defense contractors.