

# Exec supports goals of Challenge Program

**T**yson Cook, business development officer for Somerset Trust Co., believes that an investment in The Challenge Program Inc. is an investment in the future.

"(The Challenge Program) gives me the opportunity to relate the kind of messages to high school students that I wish I would have known at (age) 16 or 17: Messages about credit cards and managing debt," he said. "It's important because these kids are ultimately going to be our customers."

Another rewarding aspect of The Challenge Program for Cook is that it provides him with the opportunity to give back to his community, an ideal that Cook believes always has been at the forefront for Somerset Trust Co.

"To be able to give someone

a job makes a huge impact (on the community at large), because you're giving back in the community while still operating a bank and being profitable," he said. "Somerset Trust Co. has doubled in size in the past 10 years alone, and that's a huge deal for this area."

Though Cook is the sixth generation of his family to come through the ranks of Somerset Trust Co., he emphasized that his current position came from his hard work and commitment, not from his family name.

"I had to earn my stripes at the bottom just like everyone else," Cook said.

"I started on the teller lines, the same way my uncle (and current president of Somerset Trust Co.) started 32 years ago."

Cook began working for

Somerset Trust during his summer breaks from Slippery Rock University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in communication in 2002.

Upon graduating, Cook began a management training program with Somerset Trust and became branch manager of the Johnstown office in 2003.

Cook also completed a master's in business administration from Point Park University while working for Somerset Trust.

His dual career as a student and businessman has allowed him to see the correlation between the classroom and the business world.

"The better your performance is in high school or college, the better quality of work you will provide," Cook said. "I support The Challenge Program because the four award



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categories are the foundation for a good employee."

Somerset Trust Co. is an independent community bank headquartered in Somerset. The company is a major corporate sponsor of The Challenge Program Inc. and serves as the business ambassador to four high schools in its community: Greater Johnstown, Ferndale, Johnstown Christian and Rockwood.

*The Challenge Program Inc. is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Johnstown whose dual mission is to award students with financial incentives for successes they achieve while in high school and to build a bridge between high schools and the local business community.*