

Kevin Borow and Katelyn Emigh, recipients of awards from The Challenge Program, sit next to a check for \$51,000 donated by the Wal-Mart Foundation's State Giving Program. Both are students Conemaugh Valley High School.

TODD BERKEY/
THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT



Students' efforts earn Challenge Program rewards

Wal-Mart contributes \$51,000 to Pa. initiative

BY RANDY GRIFFITH
RGRIFITH@TRIBDEM.COM

Compassion comes naturally to Katelyn Emigh.

Besides tutoring other students and volunteering at her church, the Conemaugh Valley High School senior has completed two mission trips to Hogar de Ninos Emanuel Orphanage in San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

Katelyn's 160 volunteer hours last year earned her the school's \$250 community service award through The Challenge Program Inc.

Motivating students is The Challenge Program's mission, founder Daniel Perkins said Wednesday during ceremonies recognizing a \$51,000 donation by Wal-Mart Foundation's State Giving Program.

"Grades might not be important for some kids, but if there's money at the end it motivates them. We all love free money," said Conemaugh Valley senior Kevin Borow, who earned The Challenge Program's award for highest grade point average.

Perkins accepted the donation from Richland Township Wal-Mart store manager Kurt Herkert during an assembly at Conemaugh Valley High School.

The Challenge Program connects participating

schools with businesses sponsoring cash awards to recognize academic excellence, academic improvement, attendance and community service. It was founded in 2004 in Johnstown with one school and has grown to include 123 schools and reach 65,000 students.

Wal-Mart's donation to the Pennsylvania program will be directed to 17 programs at 16 schools in seven counties. It will provide \$3,000 to each program for cash awards. Local schools participating include Conemaugh Valley, Ferndale, Glendale and Greater Johnstown high schools in Cambria County and Johnstown Christian School and Rockwood High School in Somerset County.

"Where else can you take \$51,000 and have it impact 6,500 students?" Herkert said. "This gives them a better chance at a strong career. You can't beat it."

The Challenge Program's awards recognize students for qualities that businesses want their future employees to embrace, Perkins said.

"You have to be there. That's attendance," Perkins said. "You have to focus, and where you are failing you have to improve. That's achievement. At the end of the day, we all want to give back to our community. That's service."