

PP&L fuels Partnership scholarship program with \$5,000 grant

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of a three-part series.

By **JIM DINO**
Standard-Speaker

The fledgling Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership scholarship program is now official, thanks to a grant.

PP&L is giving the new scholarship program, meant to keep area youth in the area by paying for part of their education, a \$5,000 grant.

Martha Herron, a member of the partnership who is PP&L's Hazleton area manager, said the grant program's is exactly in line with PP&L's community goals.

"One of PP&L's corporate goals is education, because children are our future, and the future workforce," Herron said. "We are committed to the Civic Partnership and its grass-roots movement to stop the brain drain this area is suffering from and set up a scholarship program."

Herron said PP&L wants to keep young people in the area, and realizes there must be job opportunities for them in order to keep them here.

"We saw an opportunity to contribute to another community need," she said. "We wanted to provide the money necessary for the scholarship program to keep young people in the community, but we must be able to offer them jobs in the community."

The scholarship committee has been talking with the business and industry community in the Hazleton area already, and has identified a need - industrial mechanical technicians. There are about 30 positions that pay in the \$40,000- to \$50,000-a-year range.

The scholarship committee's intention is to award one scholarship per year to a student in either a two-year or four year program in a field where there is a job demand. The scholarship would pay for the second of a two-year program, or the last two years of a four-year program.

The only catch is that the student - who must apply to be considered for the scholarship - must sign an agreement that they will agree to stay in the community and work at least three years after completing their education.

In order to fund the program, the scholarship committee will be soliciting local business and industry for contributions. The PP&L grant is the first.

Being involved in educational programs like this is nothing new for PP&L, Herron says.

PP&L has been a member of the Utility and Business Education Coalition (UBEC) - a group that also includes UGI Gas Corp. and General Public Utilities - who have been working together for several years to "prepare students for academically with technical life skills to enter the workforce," Herron said.

Another program PP&L is involved in is the High Schools At Work program, in which earned with the future - youth.

"integrated, and students tested on their skills.

"In that program, the testing showed their skills increased each year," Herron said. "It's business and industry together with education. This (the Hazleton Area School District) is one of the leadership sites in the country for this program."

PP&L also participates in an Adopt A School program. "We read to students at Holy Spirit Academy," she said.

PP&L is involved in all of these programs because its officials are concerned with the future - youth.

"The community is growing, and we need to keep young minds with new ideas here," she said. "The scholarship program at least provides an incentive to give it a try."