



JIM DINO/Standard-Speaker

Martha Herron, second from right, community development director for PPL Utilities, presents a check for \$5,000 to Jack St. Pierre, third from left, for the Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership's Scholarship program, which is aimed at keeping young people in the area after completing their education. Also pictured, from left: Kelly Baldwin, Manufacturer's Association of Mid-Eastern Pennsylvania and a scholarship awards committee member; Jack Goulstone, scholarship awards committee member; and Bob Skulsky, Partnership executive director.

PPL pledges \$5G to Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership's Scholarship program

By **JIM DINO**

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A local scholarship program aimed at training workers needed in local business and industry is continuing.

PPL Utilities has pledged another \$5,000 to the Greater Hazleton Civic Partnership's Scholarship program.

The Partnership started the program three years ago to help students pay for their education, if they pledged to stay in the area for three years.

Jack St. Pierre, chairman of the Partnership's scholarship committee, said the purpose of the program is important, not only to employers looking for workers with specific skills, but also to keeping the area's young people in the area after completing their education.

"We need to be able to offer our kids jobs here," St. Pierre said. "If we help them with their finances, they can get the skills they need."

St. Pierre said the Partnership has circulated 160 letters

to local business and industry, looking for pledges to the program.

"We are looking for companies to make a multi-year pledge," St. Pierre said.

"The number of scholarships we'll be able to offer depends on the pledges."

This past spring, the Partnership awarded its first scholarship to Jason Bellitts of Tresckow, a student in heating, ventilating and air conditioning, at Lehigh-Carbon Community College.

St. Pierre said it's going to take time for the scholarship program to take root in the local workforce.

"If we offer one scholarship per year, it's going to take a

long time for those students to come back and make an impact on the local job market," he said.

"The more who could give will help boost the return rate."

He said the job market still has needs potential students can fill.

"Even with all of the industries coming into the area, there are still want ads for maintenance personnel," he said.

In the near future, St. Pierre said scholarship committee members will be knocking on doors to solicit for the program.

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