

# Opinion

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Program empowers workforce with needed technical skills

Editor,

Many people can't find good jobs in the Greater Hazleton area, while many area employers can't find people with the technical skills that they need. Most of our students avoid technical courses of study in secondary and postsecondary schools and thereby pass up good career opportunities. Many of those that do pursue such fields of study leave the area when they complete their educations, unaware of career opportunities in the Hazleton area. The results are missed opportunity for students and a shortage of technically skilled workers for employers.

The Civic Partnership Scholarship Program aims to encourage students of all ages and life stages to pursue technical studies and to remain in the area after completion of those studies. The program rewards students who enter programs ranging from certificate to associate and baccalaureate degree programs. Studies may include industrial maintenance technology; mechanical, electrical and information technologies; engineering; nursing and medical technologies.

The program awards \$3,000 per year for up to two years for students enrolled in appropriate courses of study. Students are required to maintain a 2.75 cumulative grade point average, and are required to work in the Greater Hazleton area for at least three years upon completion of their studies. The scholarship is designed to encourage students to seek technical careers, and, when they have completed, to put down roots in the region. Should students decide not to remain after the three years, their training makes it easy for them to relocate.

Technical careers were originally selected due to a continuing need for qualified industri-

al maintenance technicians in a number of our industries. Eighteen years later, high-paying jobs in this and other technical fields still exist and are expected to increase as new, sophisticated, nationally known industries continue to locate in CAN DO's five industrial parks. Pay rates range between \$16 and over \$40 per hour in these careers. Employees in other technical areas can earn more.

Arc Electric, Ash-Tec, Bemis, Cargill Meat Products, First Federal Foundation, Hershey Foods, International Paper Co., Luzerne Foundation, PPL Utilities, the St. Pierre Foundation, Summit Manufacturing, Temple Inland Paperboard, Thoren Caging, UGI Utilities, and individual benefactors, have all supported this program in the past. The partnership is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, making contributions tax deductible.

For more information on the program or to apply for a scholarship go to the Civic Partnership's website, [civicpartnership.com](http://civicpartnership.com), or call the Civic Partnership at the number listed below. Applications are available at the website or by contacting our office. The deadline for applications is May 15.

Finding funding to continue the program has been a challenge. If you are interested, please contact Bob Skulsky at 455-1509, ext. 110, or at [civic@hazletonchamber.org](mailto:civic@hazletonchamber.org). We need to take action to develop student skills, to limit the loss of some of our most talented young people and to close this technology gap in our workforce.

**John Madden**

CHAIR, CIVIC PARTNERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

**Bob Skulsky**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GREATER HAZLETON AREA CIVIC PARTNERSHIP