

Paoli Business & Professional Association Front Porch Trust

(501©3 established with the Chester County Community Foundation)

Why “Front Porch Trust”?: There is a sense that people are moving from urban to suburban (and even exurban) areas, building their “castles” on quarter-acre lots, surrounding them with “moats”, pulling up their “drawbridges”, erecting fences or planting shrubbery to block their neighbor’s view, turning on the television or computer, and eschewing human contact. What has happened to the front porches we knew as children, those places where we could commune informally with our neighbors? The Paoli 250 celebration became our “front porch”. We gained new friends and new business contacts. Our business association board was invigorated with new members, “thoughtful, committed citizens” who demonstrated “can do” spirit during Paoli 250.

Background: The trust was established in 2005 as an outgrowth of the Paoli 250 celebration. The purpose was to provide six (6) college scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$1000 for seniors at Conestoga and Great Valley High Schools. Students were judged based upon their community volunteer leadership as it relates to Margaret Mead’s comment: *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”* The trust has raised over \$50,000, including one “anonymous” gift of \$25,000. Penn Liberty Bank has contributed \$5000 and raised an additional \$15,000.

Award Ceremonies: During two “Breakfasts For Champions” at People’s Light, most recently April 26, a total of \$8000 in scholarships has been awarded. The ceremony is organized by the “Breakfast For Champions” committee, which consists of representatives from the high schools, the trust and other local leaders. Each high school selects the winners. The award recipients are asked to read their 500-word essays. The level of community involvement is impressive; the impact on the 100+ attendees (which includes all award applicants and their parents) is emotional. The main speakers have been Lou Teti, West Chester attorney, and Duane Milne, recently-elected representative. Their theme is that local students may obtain their college education anywhere, but that they should seriously consider returning to this area for all the lifestyle and employment opportunities Chester County offers. Local businesses show their support by paying for tables to display their “wares”.

What Now?: The trust assets are \$50,000. Our objective is to raise another \$50,000. With this amount, plus the ongoing contributions of Penn Liberty and the business community, and investment income from the foundation, we will “endow” the trust and, hopefully, provide increasing scholarship funds in perpetuity. Young folks will understand how our business and school leaders feel about community involvement, and why they should consider being life-long “thoughtful, committed citizens” right here.

Ed Auble

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March 2008