

Wayne County Wins PEDA Award for Stourbridge Project



ERIE, PA – (Oct. 4, 2018) The PA Economic Development Association (PEDA) chose Wayne County’s Stourbridge Project as one of just three initiatives across the Commonwealth to be recognized with the 2018 Economic Development Awards on Tuesday. Stourbridge was named the “2018 Economic Development Project of the Year”.

Awards Committee Chair Pamela Shupp of the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance, said, “Economic development organizations are inventing new programs and strategies to respond to the rapidly changing business and community environments. The unique and innovative ways they are transforming communities is something we are pleased to celebrate and recognize.”

Wayne Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Mary Beth Wood, along with Stourbridge Project Director Susan Shaffer and Helene Mancuso and Jess Wolk of the Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance presented the award to the County Commissioners on Thursday.

Wood said the project was born out of the Wayne Tomorrow initiative as the best way to grow businesses. The challenge, she noted, was to do it with limited resources and without the traditional economic engines like higher education institutions and large corporations.

Nearly \$2 million has gone into the transformation of the 1928 elementary school at the county’s Park Street Complex into a technology-focused business incubator with free co-working space, which is open to the public during business hours and has 24/7 access for members.

Half of that investment came from Wayne County in the form of the building, maintenance and in-kind contributions. The collaborative effort also helped attract investment from the Appalachian Regional Commission, the USDA Rural Development Fund, the Commonwealth Financing Authority and others.

The Stourbridge Project is one of only two rural business incubators in the Ben Franklin Technology Partners network, and it also has been designated as a Keystone Innovation Zone through East Stroudsburg University.

Commissioner Wendell Kay, who attended the awards luncheon, said, “It’s a team building attitude that we are trying to foster here. Teamwork is the key to any venture. The more collaboration you have, the better your chance of success.”

Stourbridge Project Director Susan Shaffer spoke to that success, noting that during a recent Fiddle Festival representatives of three major corporations – Siemens, Raytheon and Twitter – were all using the space. “This is the first of many awards,” she predicted.

Commissioner Chairman Brian Smith said the collaboration of those involved in the Wayne Tomorrow Initiative has been instrumental in the launch and success of the Stourbridge Project. Smith, Kay, and then-Commissioner Jonathan Fritz launched Wayne Tomorrow as one after another of the county’s large manufacturers closed their doors, and it became clear that 300-job companies were not going “drop in our laps,” Smith said “We had to rebuild a platform of opportunity.”

Jess Wolk, who oversees the programming at the facility, said it could not have been done without the community, noting nearly 700 people have participated in more than 75 classes since the facility opened in 2015.

Commissioner Joseph Adams said, “Public-private partnerships may be buzz words, but we are really doing it here.”

CUTLINES: Wayne County Commissioners (standing from left) Wendell Kay, Brian Smith, Joe Adams and Chief Clerk Vicky Botjer, accept the Project of the Year Award from Susan Shaffer, Mary Beth Wood, Helene Mancuso and Jess Wolk (seated from left) presented by the PA Economic Development Association on Oct. 2.

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