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PROMOTING REGIONAL COOPERATION IN METROPOLITAN PHILADELPHIA.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Municipalities Conference II

How can Southeastern Pennsylvania responsibly grow its tax base? How can the region provide growing employment opportunities and a high quality of life to residents? These questions were the focus of the second Southeastern Pennsylvania Municipalities Conference, which occurred on Saturday, March 15, 1997 at the Desmond Hotel in Malvern, PA.

The 1996 Conference, the first-ever meeting about inter-municipal cooperation of this magnitude in the region, attracted 250 elected officials, municipal managers, and business and civic leaders representing over 60 municipalities.

The 1997 gathering featured:

- Issue Forums with State Legislators that gave participants an opportunity to learn about and debate legislative policy in the areas of tax reform, work force development and land use.
- “Best Practices” Case Studies which presented specific examples of inter-municipal cooperation that quantified the actual dollars saved and service efficiencies gained; and a workshop which detailed the process of inter-municipal cooperation.
- Economic Development Luncheon Panel which focused on strategies to enhance the region’s competitiveness in the 21st century global economy with perspectives on workforce development, tax policy and success stories from other regions.

We partnered again with the Pennsylvania Economy League, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in presenting these sessions. We were delighted to welcome the Project for Regional Cooperation as a new partner in 1997. The Conference was funded in part by the William Penn Foundation.

Greater Philadelphia High School Partnership: Project Update

Providing supplies for the homeless, rehabbing homes, feeding the hungry, cleaning up debris-strewn lots and parks— these are just some of the many ideas high school students from across the region put forth as concrete, doable solutions to problems facing the Greater Philadelphia region. And these students did much more than merely brainstorming: under the banner of the Greater Philadelphia High School Partnership, a Center-organized program, they formed “Impact Teams” comprised of city and suburban members which conducted community service projects. The city-suburban angle adds a unique spin to conducting community service and gave participating students a valuable educational experience as they learned about life in other parts of the region. The Partnership has been funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the William Penn Foundation

and the Philadelphia Foundation. Phase one of the 1996-97 Partnership program got underway in the summer of 1996, as we enlisted 72 high schools — half city, half suburban, with a mix of public, private, and parochial — across the region to participate. On September 30, a reception and dinner was held courtesy of Sun Company at the Sunbrook Conference Center to give project Advisors (usually teachers at participating schools) a chance to learn about their crucial role guiding students in the program.

Approximately 500 students from participating city and suburban high schools had a chance to meet each other at two Networking Sessions on October 29 and 30 at International House on the Penn campus. These sessions paired city and suburban schools in twenty project Impact Teams of students and advisors from four or five schools. During the Networking Sessions, Impact Team members brainstormed problems facing the region and potential service projects they could carry out together to help make a difference on a particular issue (or issues).

In the second phase of the Partnership (November 1996 - March 1997), Impact Teams designed and carried out their projects. Some teams developed their own projects from scratch while others contributed their volunteer efforts to existing, adult-led programs at community service organizations throughout the region. In addition, Project Manager Carrie Kitchen noted that “in the course of project coordination, the Center is seeking opportunities to develop special projects to encourage bridge-building between city and suburban students, including in-school exchanges, after-school visits, or other special events and activities.”

On January 20, 1997, many teams participated in the Martin Luther King Day of Service, an effort which encouraged and coordinated students and the public in general to take part in community service activities in honor of Dr. King’s life and teachings. The Center partnered with the Corporation for National Service, the School District of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity, Mayor Rendell, Philadelphia Cares, Power 99 Radio, the Philadelphia Martin Luther King Association for Nonviolence, and other organizations and individuals to help organize the Day of Service. The Center urged students in the Partnership to participate not only to help honor Dr. King’s memory, but to increase interaction among Impact Team members and strengthen commitment to the Partnership and to community service in general.

In the third phase of the Partnership (April 1997), Impact Teams showcased the results of their community service projects and celebrated their efforts at the second annual region-wide Greater Philadelphia High School Convocation on April 15, 1997 at Penn’s Annenberg Center. Two sets of students from high schools across the region gathered at the Convocation: participants in the 1996-97 program who displayed their projects in a “science fair” format designed to highlight the city-suburban and community service issues they worked on during the year, and freshmen, sophomores, and juniors from area schools that were potentially interested in participating in the 1997-98 program. The Convocation featured individual and team awards, entertainment, motivational speakers, and educational activities to help students learn about the Greater Philadelphia region,

regional cooperation, and community service. Donnie Bullock, an advisor to one of the impact teams, was quoted in a Philadelphia Daily News article about the Partnership: "students learn to give back to the community, and to be responsible citizens." "The program will succeed," she notes, "if participants learn about issues and how to make a difference in ... lives." Philadelphia Daily News, October 31, 1996

New Standards Project Update

Representatives from 54 of the 61 school districts in Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery Counties turned out for the New Standards in Education Conference: Meeting America's Human Capital Challenge held October 3, 1996 at the Gregg Conference Center. The meeting highlighted standards and assessments as the best strategic intervention schools can make to improve the education of America's children, and featured an in-depth look at New Standards materials in Math, Science, English and Applied Learning.

The Center for Greater Philadelphia organized the Conference in conjunction with Penn's Graduate School of Education, Greater Philadelphia First, the Pennsylvania Business-Education Partnership, Pennsylvania State Education Association, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

The Center's intensive efforts on the New Standards project is now focused in several school districts around the region. Our goals are to win support from school boards for standards and assessments and to build a broad-based coalition in each community to support the adoption of standards.

In related news, the Commonwealth is heeding the call of the 1996 National Education Summit and working to develop standards and assessments for Pennsylvania schools. The Center has urged the Commission to use the standards and assessments developed by the New Standards Project as the basis for its work. We encourage you to write to the Commission, Governor Ridge and the Secretary of Education if you agree.