



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE CHAMBER CELEBRATES 'A NIGHT IN THE SPOTLIGHT' DURING 99TH ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

Uniontown, PA – For nearly a century, the Fayette Chamber of Commerce has been gathering with local businesses and community leaders at their annual awards dinner. Nearly 330 attendees rallied for the 99th event, as the Chamber spotlighted several standout individuals and organizations who have contributed to the success of the chamber and the growth of the county.

During Thursday's event at Lakeside Venues, chamber Executive Director Muriel Nuttall spoke not only of the milestone, but what it means for the county, as well as the cooperation and collaboration it took to get there.

"This year marks a truly significant milestone. The Fayette Chamber of Commerce is celebrating its 99th anniversary – 99 years of service, advocacy and dedication to the businesses and people of this community," she said. "Think about what that represents: nearly a century of individuals working together to foster growth, create opportunities and make this region stronger. And just like the businesses it supports, this chamber didn't grow from one grand event or sweeping action; it was built, year after year, through countless small gestures of connection, collaboration and care."

Past President Devan White highlighted one of the county's newest reasons to celebrate – a ribbon-cutting held earlier that day for WVU Medicine Uniontown Hospital's new birthing center.

"A birthing center is more than a place for babies to enter the world – it's a lifeline for our rural families," White said. "It's the difference between worry and relief, between danger and safety. It's where a mother feels cared for, where a father holds his newborn for the first time, and where a community welcomes its future. A birthing center is not just about healthcare; it's about hope, dignity and the promise that every new life matters."

Current Board President Connie Slampak and Incoming President Kathi Rabbit also addressed the crowd, both acknowledging the Chamber's "significant contributions and impact throughout Fayette County, offering opportunities for networking, learning and community building."

Before announcing award winners, Nuttall acknowledged chamber members who passed away during the year, including board members Patrina Ross and Phil Michael. She also mentioned Slampak's husband, chamber supporter Jerry Slampak.

“These were not average people. These were amazing people who were loved by the community, and who loved the chamber and working to make things great,” she said. “If you knew any of them, your first memory should be their smiles. We honor their work and their commitment to Fayette.”

Michael, a longtime state constable who died in May, was the inspiration for a brand new award in his honor. Nuttall shared that chamber board member Matt George reached out following Michael’s passing. He, along with Michael’s wife Trish and brother Chuck, created the Philip M. Michael Award for Meritorious Public Service.

Nuttall said the chamber wanted to recognize Michael’s service by bestowing the first award on him. Uniontown Police Chief DJ Dewitt also was selected as the 2024 winner of the Philip M. Michael Award.

“It’s an absolute honor. Phil was one of my best friends and a mentor to me,” Dewitt said. “Phil helped me get my career started in Uniontown. He had a way of speaking things into existence. If I can follow just a small portion of what he was able to do to affect positive change in this community, we’ll be doing something good.”

The Herman M. Buck Award, named for a local attorney, is presented to a younger member of the community, typically under the age of 45, who exhibits extraordinary commitment and leadership. Frank Mutnansky, a local business owner, entrepreneur and avid volunteer, received this year’s honor.

“It is incredibly humbling to receive this award,” Mutnansky said. “Being a volunteer is something that has been entrenched in me since I was a child. I believe that when you wake up every day you should go out with the hopes of making the world a little bit better of a place than it was the day before.”

Other awards included:

- Business of the Year – the award was presented to Ford Office Technologies. The family-owned business has been dedicated to helping organizations run more efficiently and cost effectively since its founding in 1991.
- Non-Profit of the Year – two winners were recognized this year. East End Community Center was chosen by the Fayette Chamber for its advocacy of the growth, wellbeing and success of individuals and families in the community. Brownsville Chamber of Commerce selected The Perennial Project, started by former teacher and coach Joe Barantovich, who returned to his hometown and began to plant flowers among the blight and ruin, a simple initiative that blossomed into much more.
- Ambassadors of Excellence Awards – Thursa Crouse of Rep. Ryan Warner’s office, Tracy Grace of Express Employment, Jason Lamer of Faith Assembly, Brittney Remington of The Wow Booth, and Julie Jyachosky of WVU Medicine Uniontown Hospital were recognized for their dedication to their communities, churches and the chamber.

The 2024-25 cohort of Leadership Fayette also was recognized for their efforts in creating and continuing a dynamic leadership training program in Fayette County.

Nuttall drew attention to the small gestures of kindness that happen all the time and of which little notice is often paid – someone holding open a door, a neighbor shoveling a snowy walk. She encouraged those in attendance to keep in mind that these acts, though small, create connections that can become something much greater.

“Let’s remember that greatness doesn’t come only from monumental achievements. It’s found in the small, consistent actions that bring us together, strengthen our community and shape a brighter future,” she said.

To learn more about the Fayette Chamber of Commerce, visit www.fayettechamber.com. To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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