



Pennsylvania
Governor's Center for
Local Government Services

Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence

April 10, 2024



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Josh Shapiro, Governor

PA Department of Community & Economic Development
Rick Siger, Secretary
dced.pa.gov



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

Dear Honorees,

Welcome to the 2024 Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence! During Local Government Week, we are privileged to celebrate you — the local officials and organizations from all across Pennsylvania who dedicate your time, effort, and passion to getting stuff done and delivering real results for your communities.

As a former County Commissioner, I know first-hand how our city and local governments are where the rubber meets the road — working directly with the people in your communities to provide essential services, from answering calls for help in 911 dispatch centers, to protecting the residents in your communities, to helping your most vulnerable neighbors during challenging times.

The impact of your work reverberates across our Commonwealth, touching the lives of Pennsylvania families in meaningful ways every single day. This year's recipients exemplify exceptional dedication, the capacity for innovation, and an unwavering focus on making their communities a better place. They represent the very essence of public service — it is not just a vocation, it's a calling and an integral part of who you are.

As we work together to build a better future for our Commonwealth, I want you to know that my Administration stands with you in this mission to serve the good people of Pennsylvania. I believe that government can be a productive force for good in Pennsylvanians' lives and that we can continue to come together to get things done for all of our people.

I look forward to continuing this important work with each of you — and I thank you for your hard work.

All the best,

Governor Josh Shapiro



Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence

April 10, 2024
Auditorium, State Museum

10:30am

Reception

11:00am

Welcome and Recognition of Guests

Richard P. Vilello, Jr.

Deputy Secretary for Community Affairs & Development

Kelly J. Robertson

Executive Director

Governor's Center for Local Government Services

Remarks

Presentation of Awards



“Our 2024 award recipients have shown exceptional commitment to improving public services and to getting things done for their communities. Their collective work has made a difference in the health, safety and quality of life of families and individuals across Pennsylvania. Public service is not just what they do – it’s who they are, and the Commonwealth is proud to recognize them for their dedication and excellence.”

— Josh Shapiro
Governor



“As someone who got my start in public service working for local government, I know firsthand the positive and meaningful impact that local leaders and officials can make in their communities. The Pennsylvanians being recognized today have built partnerships, responded to adversity, created health and wellness initiatives and promoted community and economic revitalization through collaboration and innovation. We congratulate the 2024 award recipients and thank them for all they do, every day.”

— Austin Davis
Lieutenant Governor



“Thank you to each of the 2024 Governor’s Awards for Local Government Excellence recipients for your tireless work to improve the lives of our fellow Pennsylvanians. Local government has the most direct impact on

our daily lives and the Shapiro Administration is thrilled to celebrate the municipalities, counties, organizations, and individuals who are dedicated to providing the highest level of service to their communities. The important projects and passionate public servants recognized today truly help to make Pennsylvania the best place to live, work, and thrive.”

— Rick Siger
Secretary
PA Dept. of Community
& Economic Development



“Passion and dedication for improving their communities are the hallmarks of each of the recipients of the 2024 Governor’s Award for Local Government Excellence. The

Commonwealth is honored to recognize these motivated individuals and organizations who work tirelessly to enhance the municipalities and counties which they call home. Thank you for your commitment to creating better government and quality of life, and congratulations on your impactful achievements.”

— Mike Hanna
Executive Deputy Secretary
PA Dept. of Community
& Economic Development



“Most people don’t realize the huge role that local governments play in our daily lives, and the work done by the 2024 recipients of the Governor’s Awards for Local Government

Excellence have truly made a difference in their communities. Their hard work and dedication improve not only their regions, but all of Pennsylvania. Congratulations to this year’s recipients, and thank you for all you do, every day.”

— Richard P. Vilello, Jr.
Deputy Secretary for
Community Affairs & Development



“It takes vision, passion, and determination to step up and work for the people in your community, and the recipients of this year’s Governor’s Awards for Local Government

Excellence truly exemplify the meaning of public service. Sincere congratulations to all the 2024 recipients, and thank you for your time, effort, and the impactful difference each of you has made in your communities.”

— Kelly J. Robertson
Executive Director
Governor’s Center for Local
Government Services



AWARDS PRESENTATION

Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence

Each year, this award recognizes local governments and individuals that have found creative ways to improve their communities. The Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence are a celebration of successful local government initiatives in many areas. In total, 25 local government leaders and communities from across the state will receive awards today to recognize their achievements.

In partnership with the organizations listed below, the Governor's Center for Local Government Services sponsors the Excellence in Local Government Awards Program to honor local governments and officials who serve their communities and improve the quality of life for their residents.

- County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP)
- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA-PA)
- PA Chapter of American Planning Association (PA-APA)
- Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Governments (PA COG)
- Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association (PMAA)
- Pennsylvania Municipal League (PML)
- Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB)
- Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners (PSATC)
- Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS)

**There is no power
for change
greater than a**

COMMUNITY

**discovering
what it cares about.**

– Margaret J. Wheatley



Building Community Partnerships

City of Carbondale/NeighborWorks Northeastern PA *Lackawanna County • Beautiful Blocks Carbondale*

The Beautiful Blocks program of NeighborWorks Northeastern Pennsylvania has impacted both improving property conditions and helped combat blight for Carbondale City's participating residents in all seventy-three exterior home improvement projects, including sidewalk repair and replacement, front porch renovations, landscaping, exterior paintings, and new doors and windows.



Through this collaboration, residents have received more than \$62,000 in grant funding from NeighborWorks Northeastern Pennsylvania, totaling more than \$140,000 in funds contributed by residents toward their projects.

Environmental Wellness Initiatives

Pine Township

Allegheny County • Pine Environmental Stewardship Initiative

An environmental stewardship culture has been developed within Pine Township using State initiatives like the PADEP's MS4 program, Pollution Reduction Program, and DCED's Greenways Trails and Recreation Programs. With help from their citizens, Pine Township created an implementation strategy so



successful it has been used in many other areas such as Parks and Open Space planning, land development management, maintenance operations, education, programming, and event planning.



Fiscal Accountability & Best Management Practices

City of Scranton

Lackawanna County • Financial Recovery

Through the ACT 47 program, Scranton established a solid, sustainable fiscal program. Since exiting ACT 47, the city has continued implementing initiatives that contributed to its success as a financially healthy, sustainable community. They improved their bond rating and will no longer need a Tax Revenue Anticipation Note. The City adopted critical practices to assist with financial reporting, budget processes, and internal controls. A review of their 2023 Budget shows the massive success they've achieved.



Health & Wellness Initiatives

Greene County Human Services – Food Security Partnership/MAGIC

Greene County • Thanks For Giving Community Day

The Greene County Food Security Partnership held a "Thanks for Giving Community Day" at the Greene County Fairgrounds. This collaborative task force helped address food insecurity issues for veterans and the aging population. Food Security Partnership joined SWPA Area Agency on Aging and Greene County Veterans, offering residents information on healthy nutritional eating, exercise, access to different health care information, and personal care screenings.





Innovative Community/Governmental Initiatives

Central Keystone Council of Governments *Union County • Making Code Enforcement Local*

Central Keystone Council of Government's Maintenance Code for Property, Fire Safety, and Building has followed the best practices of the International Property Maintenance Code and the International Fire Code to address common challenges in the area. The ability to tailor the code addresses concerns unique to a particular community. This efficiency, combined with a software upgrade, has reduced average staff hours spent on a code violation by 25%, reducing the cost of enforcement to municipalities.



Innovative Community/Governmental Initiatives

Mt. Lebanon Township and Dormont Borough *Allegheny County • Financial Services Cooperative*

In March 2023, Dormont and Mt. Lebanon initiated a Financial Services Cooperative. Mt. Lebanon began administering Dormont's financial system in areas of need, specifically in Accounts Payable and Bank Reconciliations. While Dormont retains complete control over all funds, Mt. Lebanon's assistance has effectively managed their finances and budget needs.





Innovative Planning/Sound Land Use Practices

East Cocalico Township

Lancaster County • Farmers Saving Soil & Stopping Sediment (FS4)

East Cocalico Township has created an innovative program that significantly reduces sediment run-off while supporting agriculture at a fraction of the cost of conventional stormwater management techniques.

The FS4 Program encourages local farmers to leave "crop residues" on their lands after each harvest. In

2023, more than 180 acres of farmland were enrolled in the FS4 Program, reducing sediment run-off by an estimated 270,000 pounds in a year.



Intergovernmental Cooperation

Johnsonburg Borough and Ridgway Borough

Elk County • Community Pride

Johnsonburg and Ridgway Boroughs are experiencing a decline in their population, a lack of in-migration, and an aging population. This led to a decrease in home values, excess housing stock that fell into disrepair, and a shortage in the workforce due to business closures. With planning and collaboration, they devised a structured strategy to help improve their residents and local governments' quality of life.





Intergovernmental Cooperation

Tarentum Borough and Brackenridge Borough *Allegheny County • Collaborative Public Safety Initiatives*

The innovative collaboration between Tarentum and Brackenridge Boroughs combined two police forces and developed a multi-community communications platform. This initiative has enhanced public safety in both communities and serves as a model of practical inter-municipal cooperation.



While maintaining their identities, Brackenridge and Tarentum recognized the potential benefits of pooling resources for enhanced public safety after the tragic death of Brackenridge's Chief of Police in January 2023.

Promoting Community/Economic Revitalization

Mayor Thomas Guzzo and the City of New Kensington Council *Westmoreland County • Economic Revitalization of the City of New Kensington*

Mayor Thomas Guzzo and the City of New Kensington Council have worked to revitalize the City and establish economic growth by attracting 102 new businesses. The Richard K Mellon Foundation opened The Digital Foundry, a technology training program for residents. The Shriver Industrial Plant welcomed a company from Georgia,



providing 120 jobs. Build Manufacturing opening their first factory in a 1 million square foot facility along the Allegheny River, creating 300 new jobs.



Responding to Adversity

Darlington Township

Beaver County • Darlington Township Response Initiative to East Palestine Train Derailment

After the February 3, 2023, derailment of 38 Norfolk Southern railcars, which spewed hazardous material within a few hundred feet of Darlington Township, Chairman Mike Carreon stepped up to represent and protect the residents. He prioritized connecting with the immediate emergency response of local, state, and federal agencies, resulting in



many private well, soil, and livestock tests. In addition, a health clinic was opened, and reimbursement from Norfolk Southern was offered to qualified residents.

Responding to Adversity

West Reading Borough

Berks County • RM Palmer Explosion Recovery & Mayor Samantha Kaag's Leadership

On March 24, 2023, the RM Palmer Chocolate Factory explosion claimed seven lives. The West Reading Borough responded quickly and efficiently, with the volunteer fire department and the Mayor leading the effort to put out the fire and rescue victims. The Public Works Department played a crucial role as well. The Borough Council kept residents and the media



informed throughout the incident, and the community rallied together, raising over a million dollars for the families of the victims.



Technology Advancements

Middletown Township

Bucks County • Middletown Township DC-Fast Electric Vehicle Charging Station Project

Middletown Township continues to set the standard for environmental leadership among local governments. The Township has recently installed four DC-Fast Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations at the Middletown Township Municipal Center, making the Township the inaugural community in the



Commonwealth to offer Level 3 EV stations for public use. These stations serve the residents and more than 100,000 daily commuters on major area highways, making them a critical asset to the region's transportation infrastructure.

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County Commissioners Association of PA Career Recognition Award

Preston Boop



Preston Boop, serving his 6th term as a Commissioner of Union County, has been a CCAP Board of Directors member for the past ten years. Boop has rallied his colleagues in his central Pennsylvania region to advocate for increased state funding for 911 services, resulting in counties being able to take a first step toward securing the much-needed increases in a 911 surcharge. His passion towards this endeavor has increased the people's safety and well-being.

Government Finance Officers Association Career Recognition Award

Bruce Koller



Bruce Koller spent 27 years with the Allentown Parking Authority including serving as the Finance Director and Deputy Director. Most recently, he became the first Finance Director for Upper Macungie Township. He served for over 20 years in various officer capacities on the State Board of Directors for the Government Finance Officers Association of Pennsylvania (GFOA-PA). Koller championed many issues during his tenure as a director of GFOA-PA, including the initiative of hiring younger, qualified professionals in the world of government finance which has helped build stronger future leaders.



PA Chapter of the American Planning Association Career Recognition Award

Rebecca Ross



Rebecca Ross, AICP is a Principal Planner with the Delaware County Planning Department. As a project leader in developing the Countywide Comprehensive Plan for Delaware County, Rebecca was a principal author on a Land Use Policy Framework, Historic Preservation Plan, and Housing Plan. She's worked on the revitalization plan for the Borough of Prospect Park as well as a multi-municipal corridor master plan for Chester Pike. Ross also volunteers with the southeast section of the American Planning Association, Pennsylvania Chapter, and is a local representative to the state Professional Development Committee.

Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Governments Career Recognition Award

An Lewis



An Lewis serves municipalities and school districts across Allegheny County as the Executive Director of the Tri-COG Land Bank. Her focus has been eliminating blighted properties and forming a multi-municipal land bank in Allegheny County. She is the Executive Director of the Steel Rivers Council of Governments, which represents 19 municipalities in the Monongahela Valley. She serves on several other boards and committees devoted to community and neighborhood economic revitalization. She boasts 25 years of working with local governments.



PA Municipal Authorities Association Career Recognition Award

Melissa Komar



Melissa Komar, Executive Director of the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority (JRA) has helped secure over \$30 million in state, federal, and local grants. This included brownfield funding to boost economic development, funding to create Johnstown's first urgent care facility, and funding for blight elimination with over 617 blighted structures demolished. Serving as PMAA president, Melissa initiated the first-ever Authorities Future Leaders Scholarship Program to help broaden the understanding of municipal government and authority management.

Pennsylvania Municipal League Career Recognition Award

Derek Slaughter



Derek Slaughter, second-term Mayor of Williamsport and first Vice President of the PA Municipal League, has had lofty priorities. He secured funding for public safety, parks and recreation, and the recertification of the City's levee. Slaughter is bringing economic development projects to Williamsport, bringing the City back onto solid financial footing. He sits on the Mayors' Innovation Project, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), and the DCED Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC).



PA State Association of Boroughs Career Recognition Award

Amy C. Seeley



Amy C. Seeley, Canton Borough Manager/Administrator, promotes constructive dialogue in Bradford County through various initiatives, and has served as President of the Bradford County Boroughs Association since 2008. Secretary of the Western Bradford Council of Governments, board member and fiduciary of the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, and presently serves as Vice-Chair of the PSAB Board of Trustees. She has received the highly distinguished AC Scales Award and has earned the Cecil K Leberknight and Thomas Chrostwaite awards for her extensive commitment to local government.

PA State Association of Township Commissioners Career Recognition Award

John J. Jablowski, Jr.



Councilmember of Wilkes-Barre Township and President of the PA State Association of Township Commissioners, John J. Jablowski, Jr. brings three decades of leadership and experience in creating collaborations that build thriving communities. At age 23, John was elected Mayor of Ashley Borough, becoming the youngest Mayor in the 5th largest state. His priority is to engage in community improvements and educate elected officials.



**PA State Association of Township Supervisors
Career Recognition Award**

H. Scott Russell



H. Scott Russell has served on the East Hempfield Township Board of Supervisors for 14 years. He is a Senior Project Manager with McMahon Associates, an engineering firm offering a solid background in Pennsylvania municipal government operations and transportation roadway design. Russell currently serves on the Executive Board of the PA State Association of Township Supervisors, Lancaster County Association of Township Officials, Founder of the Central Lancaster County Council of Government, and the Governor's Local Government Advisory Committee.

IF YOUR ACTIONS

INSPIRE

OTHERS TO

dream more

learn more

do more

and become more

YOU ARE A

LEADER

– John Quincy Adams



First 'Secretary's Award for Municipal Excellence' City of Johnstown



The City of Johnstown was the first recipient of the Secretary's Award for Municipal Excellence. This award focuses on Pennsylvania places where local leaders have demonstrated a commitment to creating dynamic change for residents, businesses, innovators, and entrepreneurs, highlights Governor Josh Shapiro's focus on strengthening communities across the Commonwealth to spur the economy.

The City of Johnstown was selected to receive the 2023 award for many reasons, including the city's concerted effort to enhance the quality of life and economic wellbeing of its residents and

businesses, its exit from the Act 47 program in 2023, its successful efforts to obtain a \$24.4 million federal grant for numerous projects to help revitalize the city, and more.

This new award is shining a light on municipalities where everyone works together to try and reach the full potential of the place, they call home. The City of Johnstown has faced challenges over recent decades and those hardships remain, but this city's leaders have a plan, and their hard work is paying off. The Shapiro Administration is thrilled to recognize municipalities that have been able to climb out of a difficult position and are working towards a brighter future. This award will be given annually.



Pennsylvania

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Government Finance Officers Association

PA Chapter of American Planning Association

Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Governments

Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association

Pennsylvania Municipal League

Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania